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THEY TRIED TO KILL ME
Revised version 2001

Saul Gurevitz and Miriam Sidran

Submitted to the Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project
World Jewish Congress
501 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Photographs available on request. Many of them have messages on the back, written in Yiddish or Hebrew. Photographs taken in France have French inscriptions, and those from Switzerland have German inscriptions.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Saul Gurevitz

Dr. Saul Gurevitz was born in Vilna, Poland in 1920. He was educated in Vilna, in Grenoble, France and in Zurich, Switzerland. He is a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust of 1939-1945. Since 1948, he has been a practicing psychoanalyst in New York and Boston. He was an early member of the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis in New York, and he served as its Vice President, and also its Chairman of the Board, for many years. He was well known as a specialist in treating schizophrenic children, and has published extensively in this field.

In 1961, Dr. Gurevitz took a ten-year leave of absence from his practice to become a full-time painter and sculptor in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. He earned a living by selling his art, and he had several exhibitions in New York and Cape Cod.

In addition to his professional publications, Dr. Gurevitz has written poems and short stories in English, Yiddish and German. Many of these have been published.

Dr. Gurevitz lives in Brookline, Massachusetts. He is divorced, and he has two daughters who live in Massachusetts.

Miriam Sidran

Dr. Miriam Sidran was born in Washington, D.C. in 1920, and educated in New York City. During World War II, she worked on the early development of sonar at Bell Laboratories, and on the early development of radar at Columbia University.

She has taught physics, chemistry and astronomy at several universities, and has held positions at several industrial laboratories, including Grumman Aerospace Corporation, where she worked on the space program. She has published extensively in many fields, including lunar surface studies, radiation dosimetry, spectroscopy, electrophotography, oceanography, atmospheric sciences, and remote sensing from satellites. She holds a patent on a radiation dosimeter.

In 1990, she retired from Baruch College of the City University of New York as Professor Emerita of Physics and Astronomy. She lives in New York City.

This book is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Israel and Hana Gurewicz, my sister Tamara and her husband Lippa, my grandparents, Genya and Aron Aronowicz, and all of my aunts, uncles, cousins and friends, who were murdered at Ponary in 1941.

They Tried to Kill Me

By Saul Gurevitz and Miriam Sidran

Preface:

I am a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust. In 1989, I spent a week in front of a camcorder, recounting the saga of my life, from my birth in Poland in 1920, until the time of the recording. The video tape, which runs for twelve hours, forms the basis of this book. It tells the story of my survival during the Holocaust. In addition to the Germans, the chief villains in my story are the Poles, the Lithuanians, the French and the Swiss. The heroes are the good people of all nationalities who helped me survive.

In 1997, at the age of 77, I met a woman my age, and we fell in love. It has been a storybook romance. She persuaded me to write this book, and she helped me write it. Without her encouragement, devotion and labor, this book would not have been written. It has been a labor of love.

PII Redacted

Date: November 13, 2000.

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They Tried to Kill Me
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THEY TRIED TO KILL ME (edited 2001)

by Saul Gurevitz and Miriam Sidran

Part I: A Vilna Childhood

1. A Hymn to Jewish Vilna

“Vilna, my native city, you are like health. Only those who have lost you know your worth.”¹

They call me Salik. I was born in Vilna on December 10, 1920. In 1938, I left my native city, to study engineering in France. However, World War II intervened, and with it the Holocaust. In the turmoil of the war, I was marked for extermination by both the French and Swiss police. For a time I went into hiding. I also spent time in a French concentration camp and in a Swiss prison, all for the crime of being a Jew. In 1948, I emigrated to the United States.

I never returned to Vilna. Yet Vilna is with me, its images forever etched in memory. In my mind’s eye, I am a child again, crossing the cobbled streets covered with fresh snow, dodging the horse-drawn carts and the droshkies with their tinkling bells, on my way to school. Or I am in my teens, bursting with passion for life, for love, and for the rich and vibrant Yiddish culture around me.

But sometimes darker images intrude. It was never safe to go out in public, to walk on the streets. Bands of hooligans would be waiting to attack us outside our school, or when we skated on the lake. The feeling of fear has never left me. I remember the angelic little four-year-old girl walking with her mother, who said in her piping child’s voice, “Mommy, when are we going to kill all the Jews?”

Nevertheless, within our own society, Yiddish culture flourished. To me it was the soul of Vilna. Vilna lives in me today, but only as a blessed memory, the repository of my youthful dreams.

In September 1939, Vilna was overrun by the Soviet Army, and ceded to Lithuania. In 1940, Lithuania was incorporated into the Soviet Union. On June 22, 1941,

¹This is a paraphrase of the original quote, which is, “Lithuania, my native land, you are like health. Only those who have lost you know your worth.” It is from the epic poem Pan Tadeusz written in 1834 by the great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz.

Germany invaded the Soviet Union, and two days later occupied Vilna. Immediately, special teams of German executioners, called Einsatzgruppen, swept the city, slaughtering Jews in their homes and on the streets. They were enthusiastically assisted by squads of Lithuanian police and local Lithuanian thugs, who volunteered for the assignment, and were paid for it. Most of these Lithuanian murderers survived the war. Later many of them were granted refuge in the United States, claiming to be freedom fighters against the Nazis.

The Lithuanians then moved the killing place to a forest called Ponary, at the edge of town, where I used to sleigh-ride as a child. The victims were brought to Ponary, where they were dispatched by machine gun fire. These events were reported to me by eye witnesses, one of whom saw my aunt Rachel as she was dragged from her home for transport to Ponary. Her daughter Hadassah, who had not been arrested, was on the street when her mother was taken. She didn't want her to die alone, and so she went with her.

After about five weeks of this carnage, the German killing machine went into high gear. To speed up the slaughter, they herded the surviving Jews into two ghettos in the old Jewish section near the center of town. Several thousand a day were transported to Ponary for execution. They were forced to disrobe to preserve their clothing, for use by their Lithuanian neighbors. The women and girls were gang-raped, and the men were forced to dig mass graves. My father was murdered in Ponary on Yom Kippur², October 2, 1941. In November 1941 alone, more than thirty thousand Vilna Jews were murdered.

Everyone that was dear to me was there, my mother and my father, my sister Tamara and her husband Lipa, my grandparents, all of my aunts and uncles, all of my cousins, all of my school chums, all of my youthful companions, the girls I had dated, and those I had loved. My soul cries out to them in anguish, and I scream for vengeance.

No official inquiry into the massacre has ever been conducted. A sign erected in Ponary by the Lithuanian government states "Lithuanians, Poles, Russians and Jews are buried here." To the best of my knowledge they were all Jews. Many years later, Jews from Israel put up another sign that says, "Sixty thousand Jews are buried

²Yom Kippur is the Jewish Day of Atonement.

here.”

The Lithuanian murderers moved into their homes, and usurped their possessions. Hardly a building in Vilna was damaged, except in the ghetto where some fighting took place. In September 1998, the Lithuanian Chief of Police, Aleksandrus Lileikis, was finally arrested for war crimes. He had been living in the United States since the war, and had returned to Vilna to avoid being deported. The charges against him were dismissed because of his age and fragile health. He died in 2000 at the age of 93. No other person has ever been apprehended by the Lithuanian authorities.

Sometimes, in spite of myself, I wonder. Who is living in our apartment? Who has the bicycle that my best friend Tola gave me when he left Vilna for Israel? Who is playing our grand piano, or drinking tea from my grandfather's samovar? Is it someone I once knew? My rage and pain are unbearable.

I will never return to Vilna. Now, in my eightieth year, it is time to speak out, to record my lost Vilna of some sixty years ago. This is my account of my Vilna childhood.

2. Family History (Pictures of father, mother, both together, grandmother, grandfather, pictures of sister Tamara, pictures of Salik, pictures of family.)

My parents came from Russia. I never knew my father's parents; they died before I was born. I was named after my father's father, my grandfather Saul. He was married at thirteen to avoid service in the Czar's army. At that time, boys as young as twelve years of age could be drafted to serve for twenty-five years or more. The Jewish conscripts were treated brutally by their Russian officers, and many were forced to convert to Christianity. Without adequate clothing, some froze to death in the Russian winter. Very few ever came back. Since married children were not drafted, the Jewish community encouraged their children to marry young.

Often the young bride and groom lived separately with their own families until they grew up. However, in my grandfather's case, they lived together. His wife became pregnant, and she died in childbirth, leaving him a widower with a child at thirteen. A few years later he married again, and had many children. My father was one of the youngest. Some of his sisters were twenty or thirty years older than he was.

My father, Israel Gurewicz, was born in Vitebsk in Belarus. **See Picture** My mother

used to call him Izyia. His family included many generations of religious scholars, who were not rabbis. He left home to study in the Russian Czarist school, to break away from religious tradition, from Kashrut. When he left, his father asked him to keep at least one of the 613 commandments or mitzvot required of an orthodox Jew. He chose to wash his hands before eating. (A religious Jew is required to wash his hands and recite a blessing before a meal.) My father always observed this commandment. When he took a walk in the country, where he had no opportunity to wash his hands, my father would not eat. He would also eat only kosher food, and he would fast on Yom Kippur. Otherwise, he was not a religious man.

My mother, Hana Gurewicz was born in a small town called Smorgon. **See Picture** My father called her Neuta or Aneuta. My parents met in the Russian Czarist school, which was set up by the government to train teachers, who would instruct Jewish children in the Russian language. Both of my parents earned gold medals for scholarship. For some reason, I created the myth that my father did it by talent and ability, and my mother did it by hard work. Of course this was a fantasy, but it influenced me very much.

I wanted very much to be like my father. I would pretend that my achievements in school, and in life, took place by sheer talent and ability. For example, in 1948, when I completed my doctoral dissertation at the University of Zurich in only six months, I told myself that I had done it without much effort. Most students took several years to complete their theses. I realize now how hard I had to work to finish it so quickly.

My parents fled from Russia, and eventually settled in Vilna about 1910 or 1911, where they were soon joined by my mother's parents. Vilna had been the historic capital of Lithuania. In 1386, when Grand Duke Jagiello of Lithuania married the Polish Princess Jadwiga, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania formed a commonwealth with the Kingdom of Poland, and adopted the Roman Catholic faith. Later, Lithuania and Poland became separate countries. Over the years, both countries claimed and fought over Vilna. It has had a checkered history, as national borders shifted back and forth.

Since the eighteenth century, Vilna has been invaded repeatedly, notably by Russia and Germany. When my parents came to Vilna, it was under Russian control. During World War I, Vilna was occupied by the German Army. After the armistice

of November 1918, the Germans withdrew, and Lithuania regained possession of its historic capital, but only for two short months. In 1919 and 1920, Vilna was invaded in rapid succession by the Soviet Army, the Polish Army, the Soviet Army again, the Lithuanian Army, and finally in October 1920, the Polish Army again. After that, it remained part of Poland until World War II.

Each victorious army exulted in its triumph by attacking and murdering Jews. Vilna was a war zone, and my parents were in constant danger. It was not safe for them to go outdoors. They would often hide, or lie on the floor in the dark to avoid the bullets. In October 1920, after the Polish Army had finally driven the Lithuanians out, it celebrated its victory by staging a pogrom against the Jews. I was born in December 1920, in the midst of carnage in the streets. I was a very sickly baby, and was not expected to live. My parents had to risk their lives to venture out, to find a doctor, and buy my medicine.

When I was born, Vilna was in Poland. This was significant later when I applied for a visa to emigrate to the United States. I had to come in under the Polish quota, which was pitifully small. I had to wait my turn for seven years, even though my life was in constant danger in Europe. During those years of the Holocaust, I was pursued and hunted for deportation to a death camp. It was only by a succession of miraculous escapes that I was able to survive long enough to get my visa.

Throughout infancy and childhood, I suffered from digestive and respiratory illnesses, including many bouts with pneumonia. My parents were always afraid that I would get tuberculosis. My cousin, who was born at the same time, became ill and died. It broke my uncle Menachem's heart, because this was his only son. This meant that my uncle, an Orthodox Jew, would have no son to say Kaddish³ for him after his death. He envied my father, because I had survived my childhood illnesses, while his son had not. Later when I attended his Hebrew school, he took his bitterness out on me.

My father started the first Yiddish primary school in Vilna, the "Mefitzi Haskallah," to teach children about Yiddish culture, including Yiddish poetry and theater. He was called the "Verwalter," and was very much loved by his students. He taught many generations of children, including the children and grandchildren of some of his

³Kaddish is the Hebrew prayer for the dead.

original students. Yiddish was the language of instruction. The curriculum covered Yiddish culture, Hebrew, and the principles of Zionism, along with the usual primary school subjects. However, my father never joined the Zionist Party, or any other political party. He believed in teaching all viewpoints, in being inquisitive, and in keeping an open mind. For his idealism and independence we paid a heavy price.

Following his example, other Yiddish schools were soon opened. Like my father's school, most of them were free schools supported by community institutions. Over a period of time, my father raised money with the help of the children's parents, and organized a brass orchestra, trained by a Jewish musician who was a band conductor in the army. He taught the children to play and to march. None of the other Yiddish schools had a band. My father's Yiddish school was the only one to stage a parade through the city streets, with its own orchestra and flag. When the band would pass the city hall, it would stop and break into a marching tune. The other Yiddish schools were jealous. They accused my father of pandering to the Polish authorities.

The Jewish Socialist Party, or Bund eventually took control of most of the Yiddish institutions in Vilna, including the schools. The Bund was militant in its opposition to Zionism and to the teaching of Hebrew. They proclaimed Yiddish, rather than Hebrew, to be the language of the Jewish people. They believed that Socialism was the only system that could bring about the equality of all people, including the Jews. Of course this was a fantasy, as history has proved.

Since my father would not join the Bund, or modify his curriculum, they took over his school. He then started a new school called "Shulkult," which depended on the meager contributions of the parents. His students all followed him. They came from the families of workers and small business people. They could have gone to the free Yiddish schools, or to the free Polish schools called "Shabasovki," which were closed on Saturday and open on Sunday to accommodate Jews, but they chose my father's school instead.

Many parents offered services for tuition, instead of cash. Some paid in barter, e.g., a suit from the tailor or a pair of shoes from the shoemaker. However, the janitor had to be paid in currency, and the teachers needed some money. Besides someone had to figure out who should get the suit, or the pair of shoes, and how to pay for the materials. Some donations came from Yiddish writers in Europe and America, like

Mendele Moicher Sfarim (Mendele, Seller of Books), Sholem Aleichem, Sholem Asch, David Pinsky, and others who supported my father's program. Nevertheless, the teachers were terribly impoverished. It was difficult for them to buy food and clothing. During the school year, they could save barely enough to tide them over the summer vacations when they had no income. For them it was a constant struggle to survive.

When the Bund took away my father's school, they also took his orchestra. He then convinced the parents of the children in his new school to raise money for another orchestra. He inspired such enthusiasm and dedication in them that they started a new orchestra in record time.

In spite of the fact that our family was honored and respected, we lived in grinding poverty day by day. That was the price we paid for my parents integrity and devotion to the school. There was never an extra grochen⁴ for anything. The feeling of poverty has remained with me, despite my very different circumstances today. My parents never ate in a restaurant, or coffee house. They never saw a movie, or attended a concert. However, they would often receive free theater tickets from their former students, many of whom were active in the Yiddish theater.

My mother taught first grade. There were seventy to eighty children in her class, most of them not even toilet trained. They should have been in kindergarten. She had no assistance of any kind. She worked very hard, from 7:30 A.M. until late into the evening, and she was always exhausted. But during the summer vacation, we went to the countryside and she was home all day. Then we were together as a family.

My parents shared a loyalty and commitment to each other. **(Picture of both parents.)** We never heard them raise their voices in anger. My mother supported my father through all his years of struggle, first with one Yiddish school, and then with the other. He sacrificed everything to build these schools. While many educated people found well-paying jobs in libraries, in social services and in other agencies within the Jewish community, my father sentenced his family to a life of poverty. Yet my mother never complained. She was a truly loving wife.

⁴A groshen was one hundredth of a zloty, the unit of currency.

My mother's parents lived with us all of my life in Vilna. Because my parents were both teachers, and my grandparents were old, we always had a maid or a nanny to take care of the children. She would receive food, and a small room, but little or no money. She was supposed to work, clean and mend from morning to night, with half a day off for church on Sunday. So here was a paradox. We had barely enough food for ourselves, but we had a maid. In fact, it was necessary to have one.

My sister Tamara was five years old when I was born. I displaced her as the baby in the family. I was pampered and spoiled, partly because I was ill so often. My parents also seemed to favor me as a male. Even though they were both educators, I doubt that they were aware of this bias. I was always competing with my sister, and trying to surpass her, which probably made her feel even less cherished at home. When she was annoyed with my mother, she would say, "I will not call you mother. I will call you Aneuta."

Tamara had a difficult childhood. At first, she was enrolled in my father's school, but this proved to be awkward for both of them. Eventually she was transferred to another Yiddish school. At home, my parents disciplined her according to some of their "modern" educational theories. In my opinion, they broke her spirit. She began to wet her bed. As a result of her problems, she was a mediocre student, while I grew up to be one of the best students in Vilna. When my parents realized that their methods had not worked with Tamara, they reacted by being much more lenient with me.

In the last years of her life, Tamara proved that she could be an excellent student. She and her fiancé Lippa enrolled in a Zionist agricultural school, which trained prospective immigrants to Palestine. Under the British mandate, Britain was supposed to award special immigration visas to the two top students in the school. The British had clearly promised to do so. Tamara and Lippa both won the contest, but the British reneged on their promise. Lippa's sister Masha in America also tried to get visas for them, but the American visas never came. Those visas would have saved their lives. They were slaughtered at Ponary along with the other Jews of Vilna.

We occupied an apartment with many large, clean and airy rooms, in a building on Ulitza Beliny, or Beliny Street. The building had many stores. During World War I, my parents lived downstairs, and my father's school was upstairs. As the war raged,

the invading German Army appropriated the building, but somehow my father helped the owner recover it. Out of gratitude, she promised my father that we could live there for little or no rent for as long as she lived. The school also paid very little rent. When I was about twelve years old, the owner died, and her son made the school move out. For a time, he let us stay in our apartment, but later he gave us a smaller one on the top floor, at the back of the building. Since there was no elevator, we had to climb the stairs.

My grandparents kept a kosher kitchen in our household, and ate their own food. Before coming to Vilna, they had lived in Smorgon under more comfortable circumstances. My grandmother Genya was in the habit of spending a great deal of money for food. She could not learn to economize. She would buy and cook enough to feed the whole street. She baked and distributed the most wonderful cookies. My mother often fought with her over her extravagance.

My grandfather Aron Aronovich had been a manufacturer of leather goods, and a leather cutter. One of his hands was permanently crooked from holding the cutting knife. In Vilna, he earned a bit of money by buying coal and wood wholesale, and delivering them to people's homes. But mostly "Bubbe and Zedah"⁵ lived on my parents' meager earnings. Both grandparents spoiled me a lot, to the dismay of my parents.

My father's older brother Menachem was the director of a Hebrew primary and secondary school called Tushiya, which I eventually attended. He was so orthodox that he wouldn't even drink a glass of water in our house. He had two daughters, Hadassah who was a gifted painter, and the younger one Sula who was close to my age. I used to play with Sula occasionally. We didn't like my uncle's wife Rachel. We said jokingly that she could not be trusted, because she was from Galicia. We called her the "Poilisher dripke"⁶. For that matter, I didn't like my uncle either, and the feeling was mutual. He disapproved of me because I was not an observant Jew. And of course he resented me because I had survived my illnesses, while his own son had succumbed.

⁵In Yiddish, "Bubbe and Zedah" mean Grandmother and Grandfather.

⁶In Yiddish, a dripke is the carcass of an eviscerated chicken, which has been prepared for cooking.

My mother's sister Zina had a son Izyia, who was also a painter. I loved Izyia and he loved me too. There was something special about him. He had one of the first crystal radios, to which he listened with earphones. When I put my ear close to his, I could hear a violin playing. I was thrilled when he let me use the earphones for a while.

Izyia's eventual fate shows how fraught with danger life could be in Vilna. Although Izyia was not a Communist, he was commissioned to paint a banner with the slogan, "Workers of the World Unite." Foolishly he accepted the commission, even though the Communist Party was illegal. Unfortunately for him, the man who commissioned him turned out to be a police informer, who received a bounty for every "Communist" he denounced. My cousin was arrested, and held for trial.

The usual sentence for this crime would have been ten to twenty years in prison. Izyia's father sold all his possessions, and bribed the officials to reduce his sentence to six years. They let him out on bail pending trial. Thereupon, Izyia jumped bail, and fled to the Soviet Union with his girl friend. They settled down in Magnitogorsk, in the Urals, and wrote very cheerful letters for a while. They had a child called Villie, or Vil, named from the initials of Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin.

It is ironic that when Izyia was denounced, he was not a Communist. However, after his arrest, and his escape from Poland, he was so warmly welcomed by the Soviet Union that he embraced Communism. But his freedom in Russia was short-lived. Stalin, being paranoid, had never trusted Communists from abroad, nor any of his old-time supporters at home for that matter. During the Stalin purges, Izyia and his family were exiled to Siberia, and never heard from again.

As harsh as life was for us in Vilna, it was much worse in the Soviet Union. My father corresponded regularly with members of his extended family, who still lived in Vitebsk. He had a brother in Vitebsk, whose son conducted an orchestra in Minsk. In the late thirties, an American Jewish writer, probably David Pinsky had visited my father on his way to Russia. My father gave Pinsky his brother's address, so that he could visit him. From that day forward, all of my father's letters to his relatives in Vitebsk remained unanswered. As time went on, he became increasingly alarmed. He continued to write to his brother, anxious to find out what had happened to sever the connection. Finally he received a response from a family member telling him to stop asking questions. Apparently, my father's brother had been tainted by his

contact with the West, in the person of David Pinsky. He had become politically undesirable to the Soviet Government. We never heard from any of them again.

3. The City and Its People.

The Polish name for Vilna is Wilno. Vilna is its Hebrew name. In Yiddish it is Vilne, and in Russian Vilnyus. The Lithuanians call it Vilnius. We Jews acclaimed it as the “Jerusalem of Lithuania⁷,” or “Yerushalayim de Lita.” For nearly two hundred years until the Holocaust, it was the center of Jewish culture and learning in eastern Europe.

Vilna was situated at the confluence of two rivers, Vilenka and Viliya. The larger one Viliya occasionally overflowed and flooded the city. To me, Vilna was an enchanted city, with many parks, synagogues, and church towers rising to the sky.

PICTURE. I loved to ride on the river in a boat or kayak, or to walk along the shore. In the middle of the city stood a mountain or tall hill, on top of which were three crosses. **PICTURE?** Most of the churches were Roman Catholic, but there were also many Russian and Greek Orthodox churches. There were several Lutheran churches, a mosque, and many synagogues. Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and classical styles of architecture were all represented by these houses of worship. According to legend, the sixteenth century Gothic Church of St. Anne had so inspired Napoleon that he planned to transport it to France brick by brick, after he had conquered Russia. As we know, he didn’t quite succeed.

It was comforting to wake up every morning to the sound of horses’ hoofs on the cobblestones. There were very few cars in Vilna. In winter the streets were quiet. It snowed often, even in late September or early October, so that the sound was deadened. The sleighs did not make any noise, but some of the horses had bells. The droshkies (i.e., horse carriages for hire), were sleighs in winter, while in summer they had rubber wheels. In the morning, the janitors would come out and clean away the snow and horse dung from the cobblestones. Most of them were so drunk that they could hardly stand on their feet. They collected the manure in boxes, and sold it to the peasants as fertilizer.

⁷According to legend, this name for Vilna was coined by Napoleon, when he first saw the Great Synagogue.

Vilna was surrounded by many small towns and shtetloch⁸. The shtetloch were usually market towns, where Jewish merchants traded with the peasants, buying and selling their produce. The peasants would also come to the Vilna markets, bringing eggs, cheese and live chickens in their carts and wagons. Some were on foot, and some carried their shoes in their hands to preserve them. They would put them on at the entrance to the church.

The ethnic composition of Vilna varied widely, according to political and economic conditions. It was greatly altered by each invading army. During World War I, the population had been decimated. When I was born, it was about 128,000, but by the time I left home in 1938, it had swelled to nearly 210,000. A majority was Polish, the rest being Russian, Lithuanian, German, Belarusian, Jewish and a few Ukrainians. There were 60,000 to 80,000 Jews.

The masses, i.e., the peasants and workers, were ill treated by their military and upper-class rulers. They were heavily taxed. Commodities such as sugar, salt, kerosene, matches, alcohol and tobacco were expensive, because the state had a monopoly on them. Poland had a great deal of sugar, but most of it was exported to Czechoslovakia to feed horses. Peasant children never saw sugar. I remember showing it to some of them in the countryside, and they thought it was ice.

The government issued a small number of permits for the distribution and sale of liquor. Since there were so few liquor stores, anyone fortunate enough to secure such a permit could conduct a lucrative business. Safety matches were also scarce. To start a fire, a peasant would strike one flint rock against another, and direct the sparks toward a special dried mushroom that smoldered easily. If one were fortunate enough to have a match, he would cut it lengthwise into four matches.

The Polish masses hated all minorities, including the Lithuanians, Germans, Ukrainians, and especially the Jews. They even despised each other. Their hatreds were encouraged by the ruling classes, in order to distract them from their dreadful living conditions, so that they would not rebel. It was convenient to have the Jews around as scapegoats for all their troubles. And there was always liquor. Many of them drank themselves into a stupor.

⁸A shtetl is a Jewish village.

In 1918, Poland had been declared an independent state, with Marshal Jozef Pilsudski as its head. Many Jews had fought under Pilsudski in the war of liberation. In recognition of this, Pilsudski tried to protect the Jews from harm. For a time, the rabid antisemitism of the people, so carefully nurtured by the Church, was held in check. Nevertheless, in October 1920, when the Polish Army, under Zeligowski, drove the Lithuanians out of Vilna, the Poles declared open season on Jews, and slaughtered 60 or 70 of them on the streets, and in their homes.

4. Vilna and the Polish Church

Roman Catholicism was the state religion, and anti-Semitism was the official policy of both church and state. The Church encouraged its congregants to boycott Jewish businesses, but it did not openly preach violence against the Jews. However, on holidays, especially Christmas and Easter, the priests would spew their venom against the Jews, the so-called killers of Christ. The people returning from church would then rampage through the streets, attacking and killing Jews. The Church would look the other way, and so would the police. To this day, the Polish Church is the most antisemitic Christian church in the world. The people didn't need Hitler or the Nazis to incite them to violence. They had the Church.

The Church teachings spread the medieval blood libel against the Jews, namely that the Jews would kill Christian children, in order to use their blood for ritual purposes, such as the baking of matzoh. This blood libel is patently absurd. The sanctity of human life is a basic tenet of Judaism, and the chief contribution of Jewish tradition to our civilization. Such a barbarous practice would not only break the biblical commandment against killing, but also violate the dietary laws, which eschew any contact with blood. Matzoh is unleavened bread, made of flour and water; it has no other ingredients. Nevertheless, most people believed these fantastic lies. Thus whenever a child was found murdered in Vilna, the Jews would be blamed. Sometimes a child was purposely killed, in order to frame evidence against some unfortunate Jew. Once my father pointed out a man who lived across the street from us, who had served ten years in prison for this "heinous crime."

In medieval times, Vilna was enclosed by a thick wall. As the city grew, it expanded outside the wall, but part of the wall remained. Our apartment and that of my uncle Menachem were outside the wall. There was a major thoroughfare called Ostra

Brama⁹ running through an arch in the wall. In order to go from our home, or my uncle's home to the center of the city, we had to pass through the arch on Ostra Brama. Horse drawn vehicles, a few cars, and pedestrian traffic passed through the arch. A Catholic church, also called Ostra Brama, was built into the wall, so that anyone passing through the arch would pass through the church. It was built in the Renaissance style. On a balcony overlooking the street was a famous sixteenth century painting of the Virgin Mary, which was called "Black Madonna," because of her dark complexion. The church with its painting was regarded as a shrine. The street in front of the church was paved with wooden blocks instead of the usual cobblestones, to minimize traffic noise. From the street, one could hear the chanting inside.

Any offense to the Church, real or imagined, was punishable by law. Anyone passing through the arch on Ostra Brama had to remove his hat as if he were in church. Whoever failed to comply could be arrested, prosecuted and sent to prison. The law was strictly enforced. However, if no officer were present to arrest him, he might be perceived as a nonbeliever by some passerby, who would knock his hat off. Sometimes the miscreant was badly beaten. My uncle, an Orthodox Jew, considered it against his religion to remove his hat, or to enter a church for that matter. To avoid passing through the wall, he would go around it, several miles out of his way to get to the other side.

The Church staged spectacular street processions, with pageantry, incense and smoke. Each one was led by a priest with a large cross. Passers-by were required by law to show their respect by removing their hats. Funeral processions were spectacles marked by screaming and wailing. A friend of mine watching a funeral procession was overheard to say, "Aren't these strange customs?" He was arrested for insulting the state religion. For a while it was touch and go for him. He was nearly barred from taking the maturum¹⁰ exam for graduation from his gymnasium¹¹.

We had an old janitor who would drink until he fell down. He was very religious,

⁹Ostra means dawn, and Brama means big gate. The name means Gate of Dawn.

¹⁰The maturum is the standardized final examination, required by the state for graduation from a gymnasium, and for subsequent admission to any university.

¹¹A gymnasium is a secondary school.

and went on many pilgrimages. In one of them, called Calvary, he had to traverse all the Stations of the Cross. I don't remember the route he followed, but it was a long journey. At the end, he had to ascend a hill, which was purposely strewn with sharp rocks and broken glass. He had to climb it on his knees, to simulate the agony of Christ. The janitor was badly cut. He got an infection and died.

5. Early Memories

One of my earliest impressions is of waking up in a sunlit room. It was summer in the countryside. My mother and my sister were in the room, churning cream to make butter. I was in a crib. There was sunlight streaming through the window, and a feeling of peace and security within the room. Through the window I could see soldiers on horses, the famous Polish cavalry on maneuvers.

My parents were very solicitous about my health. They wanted to fatten me up so that I would not get tuberculosis. I was nurtured with special foods which my sister did not get. I was the only one at home who got milk to drink. However, I was a poor eater. I only liked a few foods, most of which would upset my delicate digestive system. I liked sausage, but I could not get it often because it was expensive. I enjoyed fried foods, such as "gribbenes" or cracklings, which is the skin and fat of a goose or chicken, fried with onions. I liked sweet apples. I did not like the wild mushrooms which we gathered as a staple of our food supply, nor the lentil soup with goose fat in it. I did not like most Jewish cooking. All meat had to be salted to draw out the blood, and boiled until it was hard. Then it was chopped with bread to stretch it. I could barely swallow it.

My mother was a very loving person. I remember how I loved her hands, and how cool they felt on my forehead, when I had a fever. I know that she loved me, but for some reason I pretended that I didn't care about her, and I pushed her away. For many years, I repressed the memory of all the times she had hugged and kissed me, and of her many acts of kindness. But I adored my father. Once when they quarreled, I told him that he had made a mess of his life when he married her. It hurt his feelings very much.

We spoke only Yiddish at home. However, my first language was Russian, taught to me by my beloved Russian nanny Natasha. My grandfather also told me Russian stories, and the first songs I learned were Russian songs. Occasionally, my parents would speak to each other in Russian. On the other hand, Polish was a foreign

language to us. We used it only to communicate with the hostile world outside.

I loved Natasha, my Russian nanny, or “nyanya” as I called her. Natasha had a lovely daughter, whom she married off at a very young age to an elderly Russian general. He was a drunkard and a wife-beater. Whenever her daughter came running home, Natasha would chastise her and send her back to her husband. I always felt sad about this, because I really liked her daughter. But I used to tell Natasha that I would stay with her forever, and if everyone else died, she could come and live with me. Then she would say, “Yes, and you will be a doctor.”

When I was about four years old, Natasha had me baptized in a Russian church. She swore me to secrecy, afraid that my parents would punish her. Of course I told them about it, but they only laughed and said, “OK, so now you are covered on all sides.” Eventually Natasha disappeared. I don’t know why or how. Most likely, I got a bit older, and no longer needed a nanny.

We had a succession of other maids after Natasha. One was a young peasant woman, who would tickle me in the genitals. I felt excitement and pleasure, and a sense that somehow it was wrong. Sex was on my mind very early. Once I saw some older boys initiating sexual exploration of a little girl. They offered her candy, so that she would lower her panties, and allow them to look at her. I also peeked at her.

At the age of five, in the countryside, I was interested in a pretty little girl named Isabella. We would lie down together for a rest hour after meals. I thought it was very pleasant. One day I took her to the cemetery and kissed her, and then swore her to silence. Of course she told everybody. They all teased us, and called us bride and groom. That was my first betrayal by a woman.

I used to play catch, and a game of throwing sticks, with other children in the yard. My early toys were often practical things, such as a little hammer, nails, screws, pliers, and some pieces of wood to nail together. I would make nail holes in the wooden window sills, and fill them with candle wax. I also had building blocks.

Although my sister was innately sweet and gentle, I was an obnoxious little brother, who sorely tried her patience. I would provoke her, and we would fight a lot. As a child I loved to play doctor. I would cut open my sister’s dolls, to see what was

inside. I would also use her water colors to paint their hands, legs and other parts in different colors. She was very upset by this. Once when I was still quite small, I became angry with her, and grabbed a kitchen knife. I hit her hand with it, and it bled. My father didn't punish me, but after that, whenever I was angry, he told me to count to ten, so that I would not lose my temper.

Once I was invited to the home of a wealthy man with a son my age. The number of toys this youngster had was incredible. Among them was a set of electric trains, complete with surrounding farms and cattle. There was a real steam engine, with electric lights, water in the boiler, and steam and sound coming out of it. Everything was powered by a little electric motor. Before I left, I was invited to select any toy I wanted as a gift. There were many lovely toys in the house, but I chose the electric motor, without which the trains would not work. When I got home, I took it apart piece by piece. Of course I could not put it together again.

I was destructive, not out of malice, but curiosity. I would take apart a clock or kaleidoscope, or anything complicated, to see how it was made. Maybe this led to my interest in seeing what was inside people, and in becoming a psychologist and psychoanalyst. But I try to do better with my patients, and put them back together again. I am now eighty years old, and I have been a psychoanalyst for many years. I have probably worked with hundreds of patients. I still wonder what is inside them. I used to ask my father, "What happens when somebody feels? What is a feeling?" I still don't know the answer.

I remember many street scenes. There was a metal railroad bridge near my home. **See picture.** The trains used to pass fifty or sixty feet above the ground. I would hear the whistles and the steam locomotives, and dream about faraway countries. One day a man was doing repairs on the bridge. Suddenly he fell down two or three stories, and I saw them carry him away. I think he was dead.

There were many drunks on the street. Once, a well-dressed passerby with a walking stick hit a drunk who was annoying him. Blood spurted from the drunk's ear, nose and mouth. I remember the policeman with the bushy red beard, who came and took him away. The bearded policeman was always around to direct traffic, and keep order. He was usually drunk himself. I would see him go into the whorehouse around the corner, and I would hear him crying and yelling inside. Later, as an adolescent, I would visualize him burying his face and beard in the prostitute's

crotch.

As a small child, I went for walks with my parents. I remember these walks very fondly. We would follow a small grassy path along the railroad tracks, where there were many flowers. I would collect snails, take them home in a box and feed them leaves and grass. Of course they eventually died. So did the frogs I collected.

I loved walking with my father, and feeling his big warm hand holding my little hand. One day when we had walked quite far, we were caught in a downpour. My father ran all the way home, carrying me in his arms. I felt so safe when I was dried off and put to bed.

My early birthdays were anticipated with great excitement. After I was asleep, or nearly so, my parents would put strings across my bed, and hang up candy and goodies, and colorful streamers, balloons and pictures. I didn't quite wake up, but I had a delicious feeling of anticipation, and love.

I was an inquisitive youngster, interested in everything. Sometimes on our walks I would ask my father questions. What is electricity? How does it get into the house? How do they decide how much we have to pay? At an early age, I wanted to know how we could circumvent the meter, and not pay anything. My father said, "What a strange mind you have. You are always trying to cheat."

When I was small, I didn't know about the hate. I used to play in the yard with a little blond blue-eyed girl, the granddaughter of my landlady. But when I was four years old, she told me that she couldn't play with me anymore, because I was a Jew. I was deeply hurt, and I cried.

My grandmother's sister, who lived in Paris, sent me a beautiful little suit for my birthday. It was made of light gray wool, and it was lined. One day I wore it to attend a soccer game with some other small boys. Some Polish ruffians chased us, and we ran. I slid down a hill, and got grass stains on my beautiful new suit. My parents said it was my fault. "Why did you go there?" Whenever I was chased or beaten, they would blame me. "Why didn't you cross the street?" Today I understand that they could do little to protect me, and in their desperation they lashed out at me. But it was painful to be chased and beaten, and not find any defenders at home.

6. Life at Home

There was another paradox. Although we were poor and our rent was low, our apartment was large and pretentious. In the winter, we could only afford to heat a few of the rooms. I shared a bedroom with my grandparents, and studied in the dining room, while everyone sat around the table talking. I learned to concentrate on my studies, and not pay attention to the noise of life around me.

Winter lasted from late September until early May. Each room had a tile furnace built into the walls, from floor to ceiling, to provide heat. My grandfather, or the maid would take care of the furnaces, and clean them out every day. The coal was stored in the basement in big chunks, which had to be carried to each room. To start the fire, the coal was placed on top of some wood, and the wood was ignited until the coal burned. The fire was started in the morning, and was allowed to die down at night. The nights were bitterly cold. To keep the heat from escaping, they installed storm windows with glass panes. Between the window pane and the storm window pane was a layer of air about six inches thick. It contained a desiccant to prevent moisture from condensing on the glass.

There was no hot water in the house. When I took a bath, someone had to first warm some water on the wood-burning stove, and then pour it into a small metal bathtub, in which I sat. The exposed part of my body froze. Our toilet was a seat with a bucket under it. We used cut up newspapers as toilet paper. After each use, the bucket was covered to minimize odors. Several times a day, the maid would empty it into a pit in the yard behind the apartment building. In cold weather, she ventured outside to empty it less often.

The pit served as a primitive sewer. It was serviced by underground pipes, which transported the raw waste into the river. I used to love fishing in the river, but I was always careful to fish upstream. Not everyone in Vilna had such primitive facilities. Wealthy people had flush toilets and modern plumbing.

There was still another paradox. In our large first-floor living room, which we could not afford to heat, we had a Steinway grand piano. During World War I, a German officer had left it there. My sister Tamara reluctantly took lessons on the piano.

Every morning I would help my grandfather heat water in the samovar, according to the same ritual. It was quite a ceremony. I would put charcoal in the central tube, and use kindling to ignite it. As the charcoal burned, it would produce smoke, which was directed into the stove by means of a tube, and vented to the outside by a chimney. Eventually the water would boil. Occasionally there was an egg for me, which we cooked in the same boiling water that was used for tea. Sometimes the egg would break into the tea water. On top of the samovar was a little teapot with some hot water and tea leaves, to form an essence. We would pour the tea essence into drinking glasses and add hot water from the samovar.

It took some practice for me to hold the hot glass, which had no handle, and to sip the tea without getting burned. I would bite off a piece of a sugar cube, and hold it in my mouth. It took skill to keep the sugar in my mouth, away from the stream of hot tea. Otherwise, it would dissolve too fast, and we had to economize. We had excellent bread with the tea, either rye or very black bread.

Since money was scarce, and homemade foods were much better, we bought as little food as possible. We ate bread with everything, to stretch the food supply. We made pasta at home, and hung it up to dry. Milk was not pasteurized, so that we had to boil it. We also let it stand, and then skimmed the cream to make sour cream, leaving behind sour milk. Both were used as food. We put milk into bottles, and made kafil, using a trace of culture from the last kafil. In the countryside, we churned cream to make butter. Seltzer water was a rare treat. We drank coffee only once or twice a year. It was a mixture of milk and coffee, with a lot of chicory, and it did not taste very good.

There were very few telephones in Vilna. Only one of my friends had a phone. When I wanted to call him, I asked the rabbi across the street to let me use his phone. I did not regularly use a phone, until many years later in Switzerland.

We had no refrigerator, and no ice box. In winter, the window sill served as a wonderful refrigerator. We bought ice in the summer, and buried it in the dirt floor of the basement. This cooled the room and preserved the mushrooms, apples and potatoes, which were also buried there. We collected the mushrooms, which grew wild in the area. At an early age, I learned to distinguish the edible varieties from the poisonous ones. Of course I didn't like them.

We made Passover wine at home. We would ferment a mixture of raisins, water and sugar, and then strain and bottle it. This demanded a tremendous amount of labor, but such labor was of minor importance, compared to the price of a bottle of wine. The quality of our wine varied from year to year, and from bottle to bottle.

Of course we never had pork, or Polish sausage in the house. But the Polish sausage and ham smelled so good! Later, as a teenager, I would buy Polish sausage with money that I had earned. I was allowed to eat it, but I could not put it on our kosher dishes. So I ate it wrapped in paper. Jewish sausages were also tasty, but they were much more expensive, because they had to conform to rabbinical standards. They were made from goose, and spices, with lots of garlic.

My grandmother would occasionally prepare the traditional Sabbath stew or pot roast called Cholent. Today many Jews remember Cholent with nostalgia. My grandmother usually used fatty beef and bones, small peeled potatoes, and peas or beans, although the ingredients would sometimes vary. She added water to cover it. She would partially cook it on Friday afternoon, and then bring it to the baker, who would cook it in his oven for more than twenty-four hours. Since religious Jews could not carry anything on the Sabbath, my grandmother would send the maid to fetch it when it was ready. We had our big Sabbath meal at about three o'clock in the afternoon.

Cholent was a Sabbath dish eaten by religious people, who were forbidden to light the oven on the Sabbath. The bakery oven would be lit before the start of the Sabbath, and would remain hot until the Sabbath was over. It was made of brick, and set into the wall, so that it retained the heat. The temperature for cooking Cholent was very critical. However, the baker's oven was unevenly heated, and there were no thermometers. The baker had to learn by trial and error where to place the Cholent in the oven, so that it would be thoroughly cooked, but would not burn.

Most people still think of Cholent as a delicious dish. Nearly anything could be added to it, including stuffed derma, matzoh balls, and fresh garlic. Some people sweetened Cholent with carrots or other sweet vegetables. Modern Jewish cook books have recipes for Cholent. In one such recipe¹², the ingredients are goose, beef

¹²The recipe, called Aunt Rosie's Cholent, is from "The Jewish Gourmet Cook Book," by Pauline Frankel, Nitty-Gritty Productions, Concord, CA, 1971.

flanken, chicken fat, onions, dried lima beans and pearl barley. Boiling water is added to cover it, and it is cooked for twenty-four hours in a 250-degree oven.

At our Sabbath Cholent meal, we usually ate until we couldn't move. Then everyone would take a nap. However, with my delicate stomach, I would get terrible heartburn, and have to take "soda," i. e. bicarbonate of soda. I still feel excruciating pains whenever I think about eating Cholent.

7. Memories of Childhood

When I was a child, my parents used to cut my hair. At age eleven, they took me to a barber for the first time. He used a hand tool, which pulled the skin, so that it hurt very much. It was worse than going to the dentist. **PICTURE** I still have a phobia about having my hair cut, unless it is a scissors cut.

I would bring a sandwich of bread, butter and homemade preserves to school for lunch. I did not have five groshen to buy a glass of tea, or a cold drink of seltzer, which I craved. At three o'clock I would return home, and at four my grandmother would usually serve my dinner. Occasionally, we would delay dinner to wait for my mother, on the rare occasions when she came home at five. My father worked twelve hours a day, until seven in the evening. When he returned, my parents would usually have their big meal together. Before I went to sleep, I would have something light to eat. We did not eat together, except on holidays, and on the Sabbath. On Friday evenings after sundown, my grandparents would light the candles in their silver candle holders, and recite the Sabbath blessing over the homemade challah¹³ and the wine.

I have warm, happy memories of the Jewish holidays. At Hanukkah we said the Hebrew blessing, as we lit the Hanukkah candles, one on the first day, and two on the second, and so on up to the eighth day. According to the Hebrew calendar, my birthday is on the fourth day of Hanukkah. We used a slab of wood as the menorah, and warmed the bottoms of the candles to make them stick.

On Hanukkah, we ate potato pancakes, roast goose, and roasted goose gribbenes.

¹³A challah is a loaf of bread, eaten by Jews, especially on the Sabbath. It is made with eggs and leavened with yeast. It is glazed with egg whites before being baked, and is often braided.

The children received little presents, and a few coins. We played a game with a draydel, or top made of lead, which had Hebrew letters on its four sides. In the game, we spun the draydel, and noted which letter came up when it stopped. That would determine who won the game. In school we sang songs, and had celebrations and theatrical presentations. Sometimes there was a concert at school, with a piano and violins.

On Lag B'Omer, which means Arbor Day, we went out into the countryside and planted trees. On Sukkoth, the religious people constructed little huts or sukkah covered with greenery, in which they ate all their meals for a week. However, our family never had a sukkah.

On Passover, we used special sets of dishes, and instead of bread, we ate matzos or unleavened bread. We had gefilte fish made of carp, a fat-rich fish which tastes delicious. We had all kinds of goodies. At the Passover Seder, we leaned on pillows, and read from the Haggadah. As the youngest child, I would ask the four Kashas, or questions. "Ma nishtana ha laila ha ze? Why is this night different from all other nights?" We weren't religious, but it was a wonderful ritual, full of the warmth and security of home, full of community and family spirit. All the men were kings, and all the women were queens. We sang songs, and ate a long-drawn-out meal.

According to tradition, my grandfather, who was leaning on a pillow like a king, would hide the Afikomen, which was half of a matzoh. He usually hid it under his pillow. As the youngest, I had to steal it from him without being noticed. Of course my grandfather knew when it was stolen. He would buy it back at the end of the meal, by giving me a gift. We could not leave the table until it was eaten.

However, the feeling of peace and safety disappeared quickly from my life. I began to feel the hostility of the people around us. When I walked home from school, there was usually a gang of older boys ready to attack me. They would seldom attack singly, but usually four or five together. Such attacks on Jewish children would sometimes result in broken teeth, or a lost eye. One got off lightly with only a bloody nose. A friend of my sister had his skull fractured in several places. He was dragged through the sand by his feet, so that sand got into his wounds. He had numerous stitches. He was very ill, but he survived. Some others did not. The feeling of danger, the fear of being attacked from behind has never left me. The

world was hostile all the time. I was never safe, whether in the city, or walking through the woods. When I tell my children about my boyhood in Vilna, they think I am exaggerating. They cannot imagine such street violence. Yet a person can get used to anything, and I did.

There was one boy, a few years older than I was, who waited for me every day after school. He would chase me, and I would run home, sweating, terrified, and out of breath. Finally, in desperation, I told my grandfather about it. The next day when I emerged from school, my grandfather was waiting on the other side of the street, holding a stick. As the young hoodlum started after me, my grandfather crossed the street, and hit him several times with the stick. He never bothered me again. That was perhaps the only time someone intervened to protect me.

Once when my sister and I were taking a walk, some hooligan grabbed her between the legs in passing. She was very upset. I was also upset, because I could not protect my sister. I felt like killing the hooligan.

These street attacks filled me with rage and fear, but I was helpless to retaliate, or to prevent them. So I took out my anger and frustration on my parents. I began to rebel against authority. I developed an explosive temper. I would destroy things, even things I liked and wanted. To some extent, this pattern has continued to this day, but after the anger flares up, I am done with it. I do not carry grudges. Years of analysis have taught me to regard these outbursts as an attempt to pull the temple down around my head, in the manner of the biblical Samson.

I was a tough child, difficult to control. I was constantly in trouble. When I broke something, I would deny breaking it. Although I adored my father, I was rude and disrespectful to him. Sometimes when my father was tutoring me in math, I would pretend that I didn't understand something, so that he would have to keep repeating it. I felt a secret pleasure in being mean and spiteful to him.

My parents never punished me physically for any misdeed. They only wanted me to admit my transgressions, but I would vehemently deny everything. On one occasion, my father spoke to me very patiently for a while, but finally gave up. As he was leaving the room, I whistled to show him that I didn't give a damn. I had never before seen my father angry. Now, for the first time in my life, he slapped me. When he left, I scratched my cheek until it bled. Then I told everyone that he had

done it to me.

Another time, when my father took me to task, I told him that I didn't owe him anything, that he had begotten me for his own pleasure. He was very upset and hurt. Sometimes my father would punish me by sending me to my room, and keeping me home from school the next day. I was secretly delighted, because then I could stay home and read.

Once I went on a hunger strike. I stayed in my room and refused to come down for meals. My grandmother brought me some milk and some water, but I ate nothing for six or seven days. Although my parents were concerned about my health, they wisely decided to wait it out. At some point, I was so weak that I could hardly get out of bed. I couldn't stand it any longer. I came down to the table. This was accepted as an apology. Thus, they spared me the humiliation of having to face them and apologize. I could not admit I was wrong without losing face. To this day, in spite of many years of personal analysis, it is still hard for me to say I am sorry.

8. The Jewish Community

Since the eighteenth century, Vilna had been the center of Jewish culture in eastern Europe. Jewish culture seemed to flourish in this alien and hostile environment. Under the influence of Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon, known to history as the Gaon of Vilna, the Jewish community had witnessed a flowering of its religious and spiritual life. It was renowned for its texts of the Mishna, and Jerusalem Talmud, which are still considered standard. In the nineteenth century, it became the center for the movement called the Haskallah or Enlightenment. It was the birthplace of the Jewish Socialist Party, or Bund. In the twentieth century, it was the focus of the Zionist movement in Russia. The Yiddische Visenschaftlicher Institute, or Jewish Scientific Research Institute, known as the YIVO, was founded in Vilna in 1924 to promote Yiddish scholarship and research. Today the YIVO has its headquarters in New York.

The community was a rich source of Hebrew and Yiddish literature, including poetry, drama, and novels. It produced numerous literary, scientific and cultural periodicals. There were six daily newspapers, and many weekly and monthly news journals. Some of the daily newspapers were of the highest quality. I read about Karl Marx at the age of thirteen, and the history of fascism at fifteen. I read "An American Tragedy" by Dreiser, the works of Charles Dickens, and many other

classics, all serialized in the Yiddish newspaper.

At the age of thirteen I had read most of Freud's Introduction to Psychoanalysis in serialized form. It had been translated into Yiddish by Dr. Max Weinreich. Can you imagine a daily newspaper publishing something like that! Dr. Weinreich was a journalist for several Yiddish newspapers, including the Jewish Daily Forward in New York. He was a noted Yiddish linguist, one of the founders of the YIVO, and one of its directors. He also had a passionate interest in the work of Freud, whom he knew personally. Freud himself was a member of YIVO's honorary board, as was Einstein.

Vilna had two Hebrew gymnasiums, my uncle's school Tushiya, and another called Tarbut. There were also Yiddish primary schools and Yiddish gymnasiums, as well as Hebrew primary schools. Most Yiddish primary schools were supported by the Jewish community, so that their tuition was free. My father's school was one of the exceptions. There were Jewish technical schools, Jewish opera companies, and several Jewish theaters, including the famous Vilnar Truppe, which performed avant guard dramas. YIVO had thousands of volumes of Judaica in its collection. There were several other Yiddish libraries, with hundreds of thousands of world literary classics translated into Yiddish. As a young boy, I read books by Dostoevski, Tolstoy, and Galsworthy, usually in Yiddish translation, and occasionally in Polish.

There were many synagogues, most of them orthodox, and a few reform.

PICTURE. The wealthy Jews had fancy synagogues. On the High Holy days, one had to pay in order to attend their services, especially if there was a famous cantor. But there were always some seats in the back for poor people, and there was also standing room.

Jewish funerals were a sight to behold, with all the weeping and wailing. Tamara had a friend whose mother, a corpulent lady, loved to go to funerals. She would follow the procession on foot, all the way to the cemetery, on the outskirts of town, crying and tearing her hair. Then she would walk home and be sick for days. Often the funerals were for people she didn't even know. When her daughter asked her why she went to them, she replied, "Do I interfere with your pleasures?"

There were many political parties, from extreme left to extreme right. Vilna was the birthplace of the Bund, which was Socialist and anti-Zionist. There were several

Zionist parties, and there was a Communist Party, which was illegal. Those who associated with the Communist Party paid a heavy price, as my cousin Izyia had learned to his sorrow.

In addition to the political parties, there were many active political organizations. Every night they offered courses, lectures, seminars, concerts, discussions and theatrical presentations, centered around politics. There was the youth Zionist organization, Hashomer Hatsair, which I joined as a teenager. Hapoalim was a worker's group, for adults with leftist leanings. There were religious groups, devoted to the study of Torah. Some of these groups opposed Zionism, because they were waiting for the Messiah to appear and lead them to the promised land. There were paramilitary groups, both religious and nonreligious. The Jabotinskis were an extremist right-wing group who wore brown shirts, and practiced military arts. The Polish government encouraged them, because they thought their military training was free preparation for the army.

To me, Jewish culture was the heart and soul of the city. This culture bred legions of young people talented in the arts, the sciences, and in politics. It produced writers, poets, dramatists, mathematicians, physicists, astronomers, archeologists, architects and economists. Here was a place where people grew in depth of feeling and intellect, where ideas could be explored and debated. People were alive. They were aware of themselves, and the world around them. I had no idea until I left Vilna that the rest of the world would be different.

The original Jewish section of Vilna was very small and very old, with narrow little streets bustling with pedestrians. It was crowded with houses spaced only a few meters apart. The houses had additions built haphazardly on top of other additions. There were paths for pedestrians, but no roads for vehicular traffic. It was very picturesque. In his Yiddish poem "Vilna," Nathan Halper addresses the Jewish section rhetorically by saying, "You are a dark amulet set in Lithuania."

This section had many small family-owned food stores, such as greengroceries, delicatessens, and butcher shops. The bakeries sold bread and pastry baked on the premises. Most of the people were tradespeople and artisans. Some worked in metal, leather and wood. There were sculptors and painters, and framers. A few of the stores were larger and fancier, but these were unusual.

There was a very small community of chassidic Jews. They dressed in the black garb originated in Germany in the middle ages. They were bearded, and they wore their hair in “payes,” or side locks. They could be easily distinguished from secular Jews, and from many other religious Jews, who wore European clothes and hair styles. Although these diverse groups of Jews did not share a common life style or religious observance, they remained bound together by two thousand years of tradition, and two thousand years of persecution. They were profoundly committed to preserving their Jewish identity. In my view, each one had a Jewish soul.

Vilna was home to Jews of every social and economic class. Most Jews lived outside the Jewish section, and in every section of the city, except those from which they were specifically excluded. My uncle Menachem lived in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood. My family lived in a mixed neighborhood with as many Jews and non-Jews, but there was little connection between us and our Gentile neighbors. I spent nearly eighteen years in Vilna but I was never in the home of a non-Jew. To me, Polish was a foreign language.

A small minority of wealthy Jews lived in the normally restricted sections, and tried to blend in with the larger society. I am sure that when the census was taken, these Jews would say they were Poles by nationality, rather than Jews. The rest of us gave our religion and our nationality as Jewish, and our state of residence as Poland. Novels have been written about how the assimilated Jews lived, and how they traveled to the mountains and fashionable resorts on the Baltic Sea. However, they were treated with disdain by their Gentile neighbors.

In the Jewish community as in all communities, wealth conferred power and influence on its owners. However wisdom, learning and intelligence were even more highly prized than money. While my family was poor, we were held in such esteem that any home would have been happy to receive me, the son of the Verwalter, as a prospective son-in-law. My status was enhanced by the fact that I was also a very good student. In our circles, a bright and talented girl was valued more than one who was merely pretty. We were intellectual, we were readers, we were politically astute, and we knew about literature and the fine arts

The children of the rich danced, wore lipstick and perfume, and took sexual liberties, which the poor and middle classes did not. We called them the Golden Youth. We looked down upon them, and they disdained us as unworldly. They tended to

assimilate into the surrounding Polish society. Many of them did not attend Yiddish schools; their parents sent them to the free government schools, where instruction was in Polish. From there they went to the government gymnasiums, which were not free. We had little contact with them.

Vilna had a very good university, the Stefan Batory University, founded by Jesuits, and named for a popular Polish king of the sixteenth century. Like all Polish universities, it was run by the government. In principle, any graduate of a gymnasium who could pay tuition was eligible for admission. However, universities throughout Europe were hotbeds of antisemitism, and anti-Jewish violence. Stefan Batory University was no exception. Jews were virtually excluded from the medical school. There was a small Jewish quota for the rest of the University, so that only those with nearly perfect grades could hope to be admitted. Even then, there were more eligible Jews than the quota allowed. To be admitted, a Jew might have to bribe the proper officials. Since we had little money, the University was hardly an option for me.

Furthermore, in 1937, the Polish medical association adopted a policy of excluding Jews from membership, and from practicing medicine in Poland. This was part of a broad national movement to expel the Jews from Poland, even before the Nazi invasion. There was no chance for me to become a doctor in Vilna.

The few Jews who attended the University were required to sit on separate benches, on the side or in the back of the classroom. Most chose to stand instead, but the professors often chased them from the room for violating the rule. However, some professors let them stand. There is a story that Pilsudski's daughter objected to this, and stood with the Jews. But I don't know whether the story is true. At first, some professors refused to enforce the segregated seating, but there were violent student protests throughout Poland, which forced them to comply.

Since the University was not open to most Jews, there were very few career opportunities in Vilna. Jews were not allowed to own land. The Zionists tried to teach young people to be farmers, to prepare them for emigration to Palestine, but the land used for training them had to be rented. There were no Jewish policemen, and no Jewish army officers, as far as I knew. A Jew could not join a Polish sports club. I knew of no Jewish owners of movie houses, although one had a Jewish woman as manager. She knew my father, and she would sometimes let me into the

movies without paying.

There was a Jewish underworld. After one of the pogroms, during which Dr. Max Weinreich lost an eye, the underworld captured and killed a perpetrator, Stanislaw Wacławski, who was a university student. He became a martyr to the Polish community, and especially to the students. Every year on November 10, the anniversary of his death, gangs of workers and students would systematically hunt down Jews, and beat them. The Jews learned to run and hide, rather than fight back. The police would disappear until the melee was over. Then they would reappear, and use their clubs to beat any Jews found hiding in private doorways and yards where they were not supposed to be. The victims were then arrested for trespassing, and for disturbing the peace. My distrust and fear of authority, and especially of the police, have never left me. These feelings were reinforced during the years of the Holocaust, when I was hunted and persecuted by the French and Swiss police.

There were missionaries who would pay Jews to convert to Catholicism. Some impoverished Jews would convert repeatedly, in different places so that they would not be recognized. In general, Jews who converted were ostracized as traitors by the Jewish community.

I speak about the Jews of Vilna with great sorrow. They were wiped out, exterminated. They remain frozen in time, unchanged by history. Perhaps I have an idealized image of this life, so rich and dynamic, so unique. If it had not disappeared, how would it have changed? Who knows?

As it was, the Lithuanians seized the property of the Jews they had murdered. They still have remnants of the YIVO library, and of the other Yiddish libraries, including some priceless volumes of Judaica. They also have rare religious artifacts, such as a sixteenth century Torah scroll, handwritten on parchment by several scribes over many years.

To the surviving Jews of Vilna, these artifacts are the soul of the eighty thousand martyred Vilna Jews. YIVO and the Jewish community have offered the Lithuanian government large sums of money for the return of their property. The offers have been refused, on the pretext that these objects are “national historic treasures.” It seems that after the killers have exterminated their victims, they treasure their cultural artifacts. What is there to say about the Lithuanian authorities, who treat the

remnants of Jewish Vilna as a historical quarry, picking at the bones with cold hearts and cold hands? Or do they serve as a tourist attraction for bringing in dollars?

And what is there to say about Poland, which expelled its Jews after three million of them had been murdered. It was one of the few countries in which Jewish survivors of concentration camps were murdered by their neighbors, while trying to return to their homes after the war.

9. Education

When I reached school age, instead of attending my father's school, I went to a different Yiddish school. There I learned to read and write Yiddish. However, my father's difficulties with the Bund soon created hostile feelings toward me. After a time, I was transferred to the Tushiya Hebrew primary school, which was affiliated with the Tushiya Hebrew Gymnasium, and also directed by my uncle. We sat on benches, each one accommodating two students. A higher bench in front of us was equipped with ink wells, and served as a desk. **SEE PICTURE.**

Only wealthy people could afford the Hebrew schools in Vilna. The students in my uncle's school were more affluent than those in my father's Yiddish school, and the tuition was much higher. However, I was excused from paying tuition. The school was run democratically, with every teacher taking part. They shared the fruits of any barter, and whatever money came in. They fared much better than our family did.

I received advanced standing, based on my previous studies, and on a difficult entrance exam. I completed several years of primary education, and eight years of gymnasium in this school. All subjects were taught in modern Hebrew, except the language, literature, history, and geography of Poland, which were taught in Polish. Even when we studied Latin, we translated Latin to Hebrew and vice versa. I had to master the Hebrew language, and to learn it fluently. It was very difficult.

I also had to learn to read and write Polish. I had already learned to speak Polish through my limited contact with the neighbors, and with the authorities. I managed to master the language, but I never liked it. It remained for me the language of the police and the authorities. I remember that my grandmother never learned to speak Polish. When a policeman would come to the house with a letter, or a form to fill out, she would be terrified. She remembered the Czarist police, who were always after the Jews, and she would nearly faint from fright.

I have forgotten Polish almost completely. However, I can still speak some Russian, although I never learned to read and write. As a child, I spoke Russian with my grandparents, and with my beloved nyanya, Natasha. I loved Russian songs. These loving connections keep the memory of Russian alive in me.

Sometimes I would return to school in the late afternoon for an arts and crafts workshop. The walk to school seemed very long, especially in winter. I had to go through dangerous neighborhoods, but it was worth it. I loved the workshop, where I was free to release my pent-up creative energy, to paint in water colors, and to model in plasticine. The teachers watched us, but gave us free rein.

In 1961, after I had practiced psychoanalysis for many years, I took a fifteen-year leave of absence to become a successful artist. During that period, I sold more than a thousand paintings and sculptures. After that, I resumed my psychoanalytic practice. My only training in art had been the workshop I attended as a small child in Vilna.

In addition to the arts and crafts workshop, we had after-school music classes, where I took violin lessons. I had always loved music. However, after only a few lessons, I realized that I lacked the natural talent of some of my classmates. At that point, I stopped taking music lessons.

I was intellectually gifted, but I didn't enjoy the subjects I learned in school. I liked the literature I chose to read, and not the books that were assigned. Sometimes, I would heat up the clinical thermometer, and pretend to be sick, coughing and sneezing on purpose, in order to stay home from school and read. I liked Sherlock Holmes and science fiction. Whenever I had a big fat book like the Three Musketeers, or the Count of Monte Cristo, I couldn't tear myself away from it. I was also interested in serious works, such as Darwin's theory, and Einstein's theory as adapted for younger readers. All these books were available in the library, in Yiddish or Polish translation.

My uncle, who directed the school, disliked me for not being religious, and resented me for having survived infancy. Ostensibly, he leaned over backwards to be "objective," to prove that he was not biased in my favor. In fact, he managed to blame me for every mischief that occurred. He could really be nasty, but of course there were times when his suspicions were justified.

When I was about twelve years old, he chose some youngsters to march as a delegation in a patriotic parade, with the flag of our school. I was selected as one of the taller ones. I wanted very much to go, but when I told my parents about this, they were unhappy. There would be crowds, and I would have to stand for hours. It would be an exhausting and dangerous ordeal for a sickly child like me.

They finally persuaded me not to go. However, they didn't inform my uncle of this decision, because there were no telephones. Since I did not want to miss the parade, I decided to watch it from the balcony of a friend's house. I persuaded my friends not to march either, so that they would be spared this dreadful ordeal. None of them had telephones, and so I visited each of the seven boys in our delegation, and invited him to join me on the balcony.

Imagine my uncle's embarrassment when his entire delegation failed to show up! Since it was a patriotic parade, such a lapse might well have offended the authorities, and caused serious reprisals against him. He might even have lost his license. The next day he summoned each of us to his office, where he learned that I was the culprit. He asked me why I had done this to him. I couldn't tell him that my parents had persuaded me not to go, or that I had wanted to save my friends from grief. So I was silent. He became more and more enraged. He shrieked and yelled at me, but still I said nothing. Then he grabbed me by my shirt, and pushed me against the wall again and again. He screamed at me, "Why don't you cry? I want you to cry." I stoically refused to say anything. Finally he gave up.

I returned home, and told my parents that I didn't want to remain in that school because I was not well treated there. I didn't tell them the details, because I did not think I would get any sympathy. Eventually, of course, I went back to the school.

On one occasion the school sponsored a trip to Warsaw for several days. The trip was arranged by the Polish government, to show the children in the provinces what the capital was like. It was a financial sacrifice for my parents, but they came through. For the first time, I traveled on a train. We also slept on the train, so that we didn't need hotels. We brought some food with us, and bought some food on the train. The train was hot, and I was tired and thirsty.

The people of Warsaw were very elegant. Our guide was an attractive young Polish girl, who looked at us with disdain because of our provincial dress. She escorted us

through some of the royal palaces, and some of the museums. We gaped wide-eyed at all the lights, and the stores in the streets. But we really did not see much of Warsaw. We did not see much of Poland either, because the train passed too rapidly through the many small towns. Until I left home in 1938, I was familiar only with Vilna and its surroundings.

I was in Warsaw again briefly in 1938. En route to France, I went to the French consul in Warsaw to get my French visa. On that occasion, I slept on the floor in a friend's house.

10. Early Adolescence

As a youngster, most of my social life and excitement took place in the summer, during my parents' school vacation in the countryside. Living expenses were lower there. We would rent a peasant's house, while the peasant moved into his stable. He would transport our household belongings in his horse-driven cart, a distance of thirty kilometers. The trip took about eight hours. I traveled on top of the cart with Tamara and our maid. To lighten the load on the horses, the peasant walked. My parents came by bus, a trip which took two hours. My grandparents remained at home.

During most of the year, the peasant lived in the house with his cows, pigs and chickens. When we arrived, we would clean up the house and whitewash it, but there were numerous insects in the walls, and bedbugs in the bed frame. We brought our own mattresses and chairs. Every night we would spend some time chasing the bugs with a candle. When they were caught, they were swollen with our blood.

The summers were short, hot and dry. Despite the insects, life in the summer was very pleasant. We were together as a family, although occasionally my father would return home to take care of some business. We saved money, because the local produce was cheap. We had fresh cheese, and we raised chickens in the yard. Among the chickens was an enterprising rooster, who would sneak into everybody's kitchen and dine on fresh butter and sour cream. He was so fast that he would escape all the sticks and stones we threw at him, and he was unperturbed by our screams and curses. At the end of the summer he was the fattest chicken in the neighborhood. We all admired his impudence, and his courage. He was a legend in his lifetime. But before we returned to the city, we had to slaughter him. We were all in tears. After he was cooked, nobody could bear to eat him.

In the summer, we would form teams, and play competitive games, and exercise and jump. I would clean the fish I caught, and the men would fry them. I went on a lot of dates, and everyone would say, "Salik is running again." Sometimes I would borrow a kayak and take a ride on the river Viliya, which ran through the countryside.

I used to love fishing. I would make a fishing pole out of a tree branch. It was so long that I couldn't get it into the house. At the local market, I would pull hairs from a horse's tail, one at a time, and accumulate enough hairs to twist them together for a fishing line. It must have been painful for the horse, who would whinny in protest. Sometimes the peasant who owned the horse would see me, and he would chase me with a whip.

After several years, I saved enough money to buy a real fishing rod and line. As a youngster, there was no way for me to earn money. The money was scratched together from the few groshen I received for Hanukkah, and various birthdays. My father took me to a famous market far outside of town, where there was a big market day once a year. Peasants came from all around. There were "bubblitchkes," which are tiny, crunchy bagels with a sweet taste. There were all kinds of delightful goodies. And I bought my fishing rod! It was very long, and tied up in a large bundle. We walked home, carrying it all the way. It wouldn't fit through the door, so we passed it through the window, and stored it for the winter.

In the summer, the peasant came to fetch us. I carried the fishing rod during the entire trip to make sure it didn't break. There was no room for it in the peasant's house, but underneath the house I found some space to conceal it. Unfortunately, one of the peasant's children observed me. The next morning when I arose early to go fishing, the rod was gone! I cannot describe the feelings of disaster that I experienced! A day or so later I saw the peasant's boy holding my fishing rod. There was nothing I could do. I could not prove it was mine, and even if I could, it wouldn't have helped. We couldn't start a war with them.

There were many such wars that I couldn't win, and I had to back down in order to survive. It was never safe to walk in the street, particularly at night. Gangs of hooligans, high on vodka, would rampage through the streets looking for Jewish victims. They were usually university students, out for an evening of fun. We had some lovely parks, but it was never safe for a Jew to sit on a bench. Somebody

would always tell you to get up and give him the seat. If you went on a sleigh ride at Ponary forest, they might take your sleigh away, and beat you up. It was not safe to walk along the river, or ride in a kayak or a row boat. I learned to kick and run to avoid being beaten, but it wounded my spirit terribly.

Often when I went out on a date, a gang of hooligans would attack me. They would usually not attack my date. They would say, "Down with the Jews. The Jewesses stay with us." My date would tell me to run, or they would kill me. So I ran, and left her there. I had no choice. They didn't do anything to her. Can you imagine how I felt! I was supposed to protect her. My mother used to cry whenever I went out at night, because she didn't know whether I would come home in one piece.

I loved to skate. It took me about four or five years to save up enough money to buy a pair of skates. When the weather was very cold, the schools were closed, and I could go skating or sleigh riding. The skating rink was a field which had been flooded and frozen over. We would go round and round, in time to the music played over a public address system. But it was dangerous, because the hooligans would try to steal our skates, which had taken so long to buy. They called us "Zhida parch," Zhida meaning Jew, and parch being a disease of the scalp. I guess it was because many Jewish boys wore yarmulkes. We used to call them "Polak flakie," flakie meaning tripe, because they ate tripe which is not kosher.

I sought solace from the tribulations of the world in books. Reading became my passion. I read a book a day. Sometimes when I was sick, or pretending to be sick, I would stay home from school and read. When I got older, I would often cut school to read in the Yiddish library. I systematically read through the encyclopedia. I read all the books we had at home. I read the books my sister was reading. I read library books that youngsters were not supposed to read, by telling the librarians that they were for my mother. Sometimes I would stay in the library until it closed, to finish some books and then check out others, so that I would not run out of reading material that night.

Reading opened up a magic world of learning and exploration for me. I was profoundly influenced by the books I read. My emotions were often so intense that I would run a fever. At some point my parents thought I was so nervous and high-strung that they told me to cut down on my reading. So I used to read at night secretly. I would pretend that I was going to sleep. To keep awake, I would tie a

rope tightly around my foot until it hurt. When the family had retired, I would read with a light under the covers.

I learned about sex by reading the classics. I remember reading Sholem Asch's story, "Motke the Thief." In one scene, Motke meets a young girl by the river, and slowly undresses her, and has some kind of sex with her. I read it over and over again. I also took out library books which dealt explicitly with sex, and I told the librarian they were for my mother. At the age of twelve, my mother caught me reading a book called, "How to be a whore." When she took the book away from me, I protested loudly and vociferously that she had no right to decide what I should read.

There were prostitutes in the streets all around us. You could get a whore for one or two zlotys. Many of the children in my school could afford a ten minute "quicky." They would come back to class breathing heavily. Everyone knew where they had been. I would envy them, but yet I didn't patronize the whores. They seemed so vulgar. I was a big talker about romantic love between a man and a woman, and the importance of saving yourself sexually for the right person. In this I was reflecting the standards and beliefs of the Jewish community, which frowned on premarital sex, as well as on divorce. And of course, I was afraid of catching a disease. So I abstained from sex. But my sexual appetites developed early, probably at the age of ten or eleven. I probably would have benefitted from an early marriage, at age thirteen or fourteen. When my father took me aside to explain the facts of life, I already knew them.

In addition to books, movies were my life, my addiction. I could get books from the library, but movies cost money. Desperate for cash, I would steal books from home, and sell them. Later I stole them from school. I also stole money from my mother's purse. She had scraped this money together with great difficulty, to buy pencils and erasers for the children. She knew exactly how much money she had. When she missed it, she thought she had mislaid or lost it. She was very distressed, and she spent long hours looking for the missing coins. My feelings of remorse and guilt were overwhelming, but I could not live without my beloved movies.

Since movies were cheaper in the afternoon, I would often cut school to attend them. I could not wear my short pants, or the knickers of my school uniform without being spotted as a schoolboy cutting classes. I had to borrow my father's old pants. They

were much too large, but I would secure them with a rope around my waist. Occasionally I would encounter someone at the movies who knew me. He might then mention this to my father, who would confront me. But I would look my father in the eye, and deny everything. Once my father brought me face to face with someone, who had not only seen me at the movies, but had conversed with me. I said he was mistaken. He had not seen me, but someone else. Of course, nobody believed my lie.

Occasionally I would sneak out to the movies in the evening, when it cost about one zloty, twice as much as in the afternoon. Sometimes the Jewish woman manager of one movie house would sneak me in. However, it was terrifying to take that long walk in the dark through dangerous neighborhoods. At some point, a Swedish company, Orbin, had introduced a few buses for public transport around the city. I would debate with myself whether to take the bus, or to buy a cigarette to calm my nerves. I could not afford both. I opted for the cigarette, and two or three matches. When I returned home, the big front gate would be locked. I had to ring the bell, and be admitted by the drunken janitor, who carried a heavy metal key, about two feet long.

Whenever I saw a movie, I would be so emotionally involved that I ran a fever. My parents soon learned to touch my face, to learn where I had been. They would demand to know where I got the money, but I would deny everything. They were worried about my emotional state, and forbade me to go to the movies.

I was a very good student. My father tutored me in mathematics and physics, so that I was far ahead of my class. I had an extensive vocabulary, and wrote very well. I kept several diaries, in which I described and analyzed my own feelings, and those of others. I thought I could read people's minds. Sometimes I would demonstrate to my friends that I could guess their thoughts. I believed in extrasensory perception or ESP, and I still do.

When I was about fourteen or fifteen, I discovered poetry. I hated the poetry they taught us in school, the Polish poets, the German poet Heine, and even some Hebrew poets like Bialik. I longed for poetry that would speak to my soul. One of my Polish professors **PICTURE** was a man of insight, who recognized my yearning for more spiritual fare. He recommended a book called "Fleurs de Mal," or "Flowers of Evil," which was in the library. For the first time, I experienced the wonder of

poetry. Later I learned to appreciate Rilke, and much later, even Bialik and Heine.

In 1988, while walking in Paris, I found a beautiful packaged edition of *Fleurs de Mal*. It contained some etchings, and it cost several hundred dollars. After some hard bargaining, I bought it for \$125. Today I write poetry, and some of it has been published. I have also won awards for my poetry.

My sister Tamara and I used to fight a great deal. We stopped fighting when she started to go out on dates, without my parents' permission. We became co-conspirators in deceiving them. She would pretend to take a walk with me, and we would meet her date. They would drop me off at a movie house, and pay for my movie. Then they would pick me up later, and escort me home. This arrangement served us both well.

When I was eleven years old, Tamara got a job making braziers. She received about a zloty for each brazier, which represented many hours of work. At the same time, I began to tutor other students. At first the baker's son paid me in cakes and cookies, but later I was able to earn about ten groshen a lesson. At that rate, I had to give five lessons to earn enough for a movie. Eventually I gave lessons to the children of the rich, and even wrote papers for some of them. Then I was able to charge much more. Since I no longer had to steal money for the movies, I stopped stealing. I could even buy a glass of tea in school every day, for five groshen. For the first time, I could go to the Polish and Yiddish theaters, and the opera.

I loved the theater. I remember sitting in the highest balcony, watching "The Dabbuk." Many of the plays had political content. I saw a play performed by the Vilna Troupe, about how China was exploited by the imperialists. Another play was based on Dreiser's "An American Tragedy," but the story was modified to appeal to a left-wing audience. In this version, the judges were bribed to exonerate the guilty man, and to condemn another man to die in his place. During the execution, the guilty man had a party. At the moment of the execution, the lights flickered, and he shuddered. One of the other characters said to him, "You cannot be a murderer with rachmones, i.e., with pity."

11. Religious Views

I had two Bar Mitzvahs. The first was in an orthodox synagogue, to please my religious uncle. On this occasion, he treated me as a surrogate for his own son.

Since he wanted me to shine, he tutored me in the Talmud and the holy texts. He selected a very difficult passage for me to read, in order to impress the congregants. The orthodox Bar Mitzvah also pleased my father, who wanted me to learn everything a Jew should know, before deciding how observant I wished to be.

The second Bar Mitzvah was arranged and financed by former students of my father. We celebrated it in our home, where several hundred people were wined and dined. I received dozens of fountain pens, and half a dozen watches, as well as many other gifts. I made a speech, which I wrote myself, about what it means to be a Jew. It was original, and was well received, but I don't remember the details. After the two Bar Mitzvahs, I told my father that I didn't want to be an observant Jew. He said it was my decision to make.

When I was nine or ten, I asked my father whether there was a God? My father answered, "Any apprentice to a barber can stand on a chair and proclaim that there is no God. But it is a difficult question. I have an answer for myself, but I think you should find your own answer."

I have found my answer. I believe there is a power beyond us which we call God, or the Deity, which we can only experience in a limited way. Any description of God is a construct of the human mind, which springs from our human nature and human needs. We are like bedbugs on a pillow that is being turned. We think the pillow is the universe, and we construct theories about it. We cannot approach the reality of the higher power. Any ideas we may have about the ultimate nature of the Deity are pure speculation. Nobody has a personal telephone line to God. But when someone pontificates on religious dogma, and especially when he says "God told me," I know it is a human bedbug telling stories. I suggest that a truly religious person should look inside himself, and keep silent.

I know that many people believe in a less abstract concept of God than I have. They are comfortable with it, and it satisfies their human needs. I have no quarrel with that, as long as it works for them. In fact, the need for some form of religion seems to be innate in human nature. There are also those who believe that there is only one true religion, and they have found it. By believing in it, they are saved, while the rest of us are damned for all eternity. I have no quarrel with their view either, as long as they do not presume to force it on others. But I find it insulting and morally offensive for them to seek converts, either by moral persuasion, or by force. It is

even more reprehensible to persecute people for their beliefs. At its worst, such behavior has led to the murder of countless millions, all in the name of religion. When I think about the crimes against humanity, committed by extremists of all the great world religions, while they claim a mandate from God, then I am ashamed of the human race.

What a peculiar people we Jews are! We represent only a tiny fraction of the world's population. We have endured two thousand years of brutal persecution, which continues to this day. Yet we remain, and we flourish like a yeast in other cultures. Our contributions to the cultures around us, in science, medicine, literature, the arts, and in innovative ideas for social progress, are vastly disproportionate to our numbers. We have produced two of the greatest geniuses of the twentieth century, Freud and Einstein, who revolutionized psychology and physics, respectively.

What is a Jew? The word defies definition. There is no Jewish race. We have intermingled with every race. As for the Jewish religion, there are many proud Jews who are nonobservant. We Jews are linked together by two thousand years of persecution. Most of us share a cultural tradition, an ethical framework, something I call the Jewish soul. I think I have a Jewish soul that laughs when I cry, and cries when I laugh. Maybe that is as good a definition as any. But does it apply to all Jews, including Ethiopians? It is a puzzlement.

It has been said that all those alive today, who identify themselves as Jews, had an orthodox ancestor within the past five generations. The others have assimilated into the surrounding cultures. This may be a good definition of a Jew, provided we amend it to include any convert to Judaism.

There are genetic markers which offer evidence of our lineage. Many Jewish men who claim membership in the priestly class, or Cohanim, have a distinctive Y chromosome, passed down from father to son. Presumably, they are descended from Aaron, the brother of Moses, whose sons were the high priests in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. Amazingly, we have kept track of the Cohanim to this day. Some have names such as Cohen, Kohn, and other variations. Jewish men of today know whether they are the priestly Cohanim, or whether they are the Levites, whose ancestors assisted the priests in the Temple, or whether they are Israel, which includes everybody else. My father was Israel.

12. Teen Years

I had always wanted a dog, but it would have been an extra mouth to feed. When I was about fourteen, my parents gave me permission to have a dog, on condition that I would begin to eat tomatoes and mushrooms. This was a big concession, because we really could not afford a dog. Since I didn't like tomatoes or mushrooms, I gulped them down. They made me sick, and I threw them up. Today they are among my favorite foods.

My sister's fiancé, Lippa, felt sorry for me, and gave me a puppy. He looked like a very small Doberman pinscher; he weighed only six pounds. I named him Jerry. He ate chicken bones, and leftover scraps that dogs are not supposed to eat. When there were no leftovers, I would give him a little bread and milk and sugar. We never took him to a veterinarian, or gave him any shots. I loved my dog Jerry. PICTURE

One day my father became gravely ill with angina pectoris. A hush of anxiety hung over our house. Whatever money we had went for medicine for my father. At the same time my dog Jerry also became ill, and threw up everything he ate. He got thinner every day. I had strong feelings of guilt, because I was much more concerned about Jerry than I was about my father. I begged and cried, and finally they let me take the dog to a vet. It was much too late. Jerry had distemper. I was distraught.

Jerry slept on the floor next to my bed. That night I tucked him in, and went to sleep. In the morning, I found him dead. He had blood coming out of his mouth. He had dragged himself as close to me as possible, as if he were trying to climb onto my bed. It was winter and the ground was frozen. Since I couldn't bury him, I dug a deep hole in the snow and put him in it. In the spring I found him frozen, and buried him in the ground. My father survived his illness.

While in my teens, I joined the Zionist youth group, Hashomer Hatsair. We were imbued with a pioneer spirit, like the scouts. We were studying to prepare for life on a kibbutz in Palestine. Life took place in the group as a whole. We shared everything. We learned to cook, to scout in the woods, and to survive for days on very little. The Polish government tolerated us as long as we did not engage in political activities in Poland. They called us "Communists for export." To these autocrats, anyone with liberal or democratic leanings was a Communist.

Hashomer Hatsair had a profound influence on me. I was encouraged to read even more about political issues, about art and poetry, about social and economic problems. We had meetings and discussions. We sang Hebrew and Zionist songs. We did not engage in social dancing. The girls didn't use makeup. Sexual activity was discouraged, and very few people paired off. It was not acceptable for a couple to go off by themselves. That would also have been too dangerous. Jewish life in Vilna was colored by fear.

Now I delved into classical psychology, and found it disappointing. It dealt mainly with perception by the senses. I had already read Freud's work in Yiddish translation, and found it much more meaningful. At thirteen, when I had first read Freud in the Yiddish paper, I knew that I wanted to be a psychologist, a healer. But psychology was still an academic discipline, and only psychiatrists could legally practice it. To become a psychoanalyst, I would first have to study medicine, and then specialize in psychiatry. Stefan Batory University had an excellent school of medicine, with classes in psychiatry, but Jews were effectively excluded from the medical school, and from the profession.

I thought about girls obsessively, but I was shy with them. Sometimes, when I came home from the theater, I would fondle the maid, while she pretended to be asleep. Middle-class girls would not have sex. I didn't know any working girls. The rich girls took sexual liberties because they had dowries, but I had virtually no contact with them.

I had a very good friend, Tola Gurwich, the son of a wealthy merchant. **Picture.** We sat on the same bench in school for many years. We would walk home from school together, and talk endlessly. Tola had an English bicycle, his prized possession, which he would let me ride whenever I wished. He had a little five-year-old sister called Essya, who was enamored of me. **Picture.** Whenever she saw me, she would come running, and give me a big bear hug. She would hang on my neck, and say, "I don't know what to do with you."

I developed a crush on Tola's cousin, Rivka Gurwich. **Picture.** She was a year or two older than I was, and she was not pretty, but she was so bright that it was hard to get a date with her. As far as she was concerned, I did not exist. So I would loiter in front of her window at night, and yearn for her. I would describe to Tola how I would undress her, if I ever got my hands on her. I tried to figure out how to

undo the buttons. If I were to tear off her dress, how would she get home? These were very important questions! Somehow in the books, everything was spontaneous. There were no buttons.

My sister Tamara taught me to dance, and I practiced with some of her girl friends. I enjoyed dancing very much. It was exciting to hold a girl tight. I would also eavesdrop when I thought she and her friends were discussing sex. I tried to question my sister about sex, but she was not forthcoming. Anyway I don't know how much she knew. As far as I know, she had no experience with sex, and probably knew nothing. Besides, I read much more than she did.

One day I was waiting on line at the post office, when an argument erupted between the two men directly in front of me, about who was ahead in line. I was behind both of them, and so it was none of my business. They became very disorderly. The clerk came out and grabbed both of them, and then for no reason he grabbed me too. He accused me of creating a public nuisance. A policeman wrote up the incident, and took my name. This meant that I now had a police record, which could bar me from taking the maturum. Without the maturum I could not graduate, nor could I be admitted to any university in the world.

I returned home crying. My parents were beside themselves. They felt scared and helpless, and of course they blamed me. "Why do you always get into trouble?" With a great deal of effort, my father obtained the home address of the clerk who had lodged the complaint. That evening we went to see him. My father groveled, and humiliated himself before this pompous bureaucrat. He begged him to withdraw the charges. Finally the man said, "OK. We will forgive him this time." He could have asked for money, but he didn't. I was able to take the maturum, and to be admitted to an engineering school in France, and later to the University of Zurich, for my doctorate.

As the time for my maturum approached, I became more fully aware that I would probably not be admitted to the University. I would have to study abroad. I had an opportunity to go to Glasgow, as the companion of the retarded son of a wealthy man. The University in Glasgow offered a degree in marine engineering. With this in mind, I took a few English lessons from an Oxford teacher, a lovely, tall stately lady. I was so cocky that I told her that I wanted to learn enough English to read Shakespeare in the original. After three lessons, I began to write short stories in

English. I had to look up nearly every word in the dictionary. My grammar must have been quite amusing. However, I finally decided not to go to Glasgow, because it would divert me from my primary goal of becoming a psychoanalyst. The lessons were discontinued.

One day a converted Jew came to see my father. The scene is engraved in my mind. He was a handsome man, tall and lean, with a Van Dyke beard and deep-set eyes. My father received him, not knowing what his errand was. He reached out his hand, but my father refused to shake it. Any Jew who converted was a traitor to his people, whether he did it for economic gain, or some other reason.

This man told my father that if I would convert to Catholicism, the Church would guarantee my admission to medical school, and even pay for my education. They didn't make offers like this to just anyone. However, because my father was a well-known Jewish teacher and activist, they were willing to make such a generous offer. Of course, he didn't mention that it would have been a feather in their cap. My father rejected the offer, and dismissed the man curtly.

13. Manya and the Maturum.

In anticipation of the maturum exams, Tola and I sought tutoring help. We were referred to a woman named Manya Rosenthal, but her fee seemed too high. At first we looked elsewhere, but Manya had made such an impression on us that nobody else would do. So we came back. Tola agreed to pay his half of the fee. I agreed to pay what I could, and eventually pay her back with what I earned from my own tutoring.

Manya was a petite woman in her thirties, blond and a bit plump. **Picture.** She spoke Polish perfectly, and she was studying psychology at the University. She was not pretty, but she was vivacious and charming. Tola and I both fell in love with her. Later I found out that she had tuberculosis, and was supposed to take care of herself. Instead, she burned the candle at both ends. Manya and her friends used to drink, smoke, dance and play jazz music. She herself was a wonderful jazz pianist.

She tutored many of the Golden Youth, who paid her handsomely. She had an excellent income. She was a very exciting teacher. Her presence made our hearts beat faster. Under her tutelage we learned a great deal about art, poetry and literature, which we needed for the exams.

Tola and I both passed the maturum with very high grades. I received the maximum grade in every subject except Polish and German. That was partly the luck of the draw. The professor assigned to test me in Polish was known to boast that he would never give a perfect grade to a Jew. I remember that on the test, I had to write two essays in Polish. One was on a subject of my choice, so that I had prepared for it in advance. I wrote on the image of women in Polish literature, which was Manya's specialty.

For the second essay, I had to choose between a question on biography, and one on literature. Manya advised me to prepare for the literature question. She thought it would be more factual, and less subject to the whims of the professor. Her advice was probably wrong. The professor gave his highest grade, just short of perfect, to a student from the Tarbut Hebrew Gymnasium, who had answered the biography question. I received the second highest grade.

The German professor who examined me, an assimilated Jew, was the head of the Examining Committee. He had stated publicly that he believed nobody should ever get a perfect score. My German score was almost, but not quite perfect. All my other grades were perfect. I even received a perfect score from the Jesuit priest who examined me in Hebrew. He had asked me to translate Latin into Hebrew and vice versa. None of this made any difference. Without perfect grades, and without money, I had no chance of being admitted to Stefan Batori University. In order to become a psychoanalyst, I would have to study abroad. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Had I been able to attend the University in Vilna, I probably would have died at Ponary.

After the maturum, Manya and I went on an excursion into the countryside. There, in a romantic setting, she seduced me. We became lovers. I later found out that she had initiated other young men, all of them very special, bright and talented. She chose them carefully. Later they became prominent writers, scientists, and physicians. I have never analyzed why Manya chose intelligent, sensitive seventeen-year-old boys as her lovers. To be selected as her lover was such an honor that other women in her circle of friends began to find me highly desirable. I could have had my pick.

She had delayed any involvement with me until after the maturum, knowing that a liaison before that would have compromised my hopes of passing. We must have

made love ten or fifteen times a day. I never could get enough of her. I was delighted to discover someone who was as intense and passionate as I was. She made me feel very special. She made me feel that I was a man, and she was my woman. She knew that I was in love with her, and she had chosen me.

Manya changed my life forever. No amount of psychoanalysis could have undone what the continued suppression of sexual expression would have done to my life. She set me free. Eventually, she sent me off into the world, saying, “Women will love you.” I think this is true. I have always loved women, and they have loved me.

I was so proud of Manya that I wanted to show her off, to be seen with her. But she was a married woman, with a husband in Israel. He had been there for a number of years. In time, she would probably have joined him, after she finished her studies at the University. But Manya died in the ghetto. If any of the young men whom she initiated are alive today as I am, her memory will never die. As long as we draw breath, we will not forget her.

14. My Final Departure.

That summer, while I was running around with Manya, I became attractive to other women. I dated Basia Iziertski, who had won an award as the second-best Chopin pianist in Poland. **Picture.** I dated Tola’s cousin, Rivka Gurwich, whom I had always desired, when she came home for the summer after two years of medical studies in Italy. **Picture:** Neither Basia nor Rivka had Manya’s magnetic eroticism. Neither could excite me as Manya did, nor could any other young woman of my acquaintance.

Basia was a virgin. When the Germans invaded Vilna in 1941, she was forced into the ghetto, where she was soon killed. Years later when I was in Switzerland, I had a chance encounter with a ghetto survivor, a former newspaper reporter. He told me that he had known Basia in the ghetto, and that he had seduced her there. He said he had “deflowered” her. I was furious with him. I also felt very sad for Basia. However, since this was probably the only sexual experience of her short life, I fervently hoped that she had enjoyed it.

It was a busy summer, my last one in Poland. Manya, Tola and I went on kayak rides together. She crocheted three little hats, one for me, one for herself, and one for Tola, to make him feel better. I still have my little crocheted hat. Manya also

gave me an alarm clock, engraved with the date December 18, the anniversary of my circumcision. Such erotic nuances were typical of Manya.

That summer, Tola and his extended family left for Israel. This included Rivka and her family. Thus, they escaped the massacre at Ponary. Before they left, they liquidated all their assets, and used their money and connections to obtain visas. Tola gave me his prized possession, his English bicycle as a gift.

I saw him again in Israel in 1957. He had a degree in architecture from Haifa University. He had a wife and children. But he was unhappy, inhibited, and living on Valium. In many ways he was a crippled person. I often wonder if he would have had a better life if Manya had chosen him instead of me. And without Manya, who knows what my fate would have been?

I used to come home from my liaisons with Manya, tired and with black rings under my eyes. My parents were concerned. Besides, people in the town were talking. We were seen in town, the Verwalter's son and a married woman. Finally my father spoke to me. He said, "Some women are insatiable. We hope you will go abroad soon. Maybe you could cool it down." As usual, I was rude and unreceptive.

He continued very sweetly, "I am well known in this town. Manya is a married woman. Couldn't you be a little more discrete?" I said, "I don't owe you anything. It is my life. If you want me to, I will leave today." Of course this was just bravado. I had no place to go. For the second time in my life, I saw my father cry. The first time was when my mother was gravely ill with asthma.

I wanted to leave Poland, never to return. I wanted to study abroad, but there were formidable obstacles. Psychoanalysis as a profession did not yet exist. It was considered a branch of medicine. I thought of studying medicine in France because my grandmother's sister lived in Paris. However the French medical association had made sure that foreign physicians could not become citizens, or practice in France.

I developed a cockamamie plan for this insane world. I would get an engineering degree in France, and then enlist in the Foreign Legion for the minimum period of five years. With such a degree, I could probably become an officer. After serving my term in the Legion, I would be eligible to apply for French citizenship. While my application was pending, and before they would permit me to practice engineering in

France, I would find work in the colonies, where engineers were needed. Once I became a citizen, I would return to France and go to medical school. After that, I would undergo a training analysis and a few years of supervision to become a psychoanalyst. Then I could live and practice in France. I hoped to complete this plan by about age thirty. It seemed reasonable to me. Even more important, it would be my ticket out of Vilna.

The first obstacle to this elaborate scheme was financial. We lived from hand to mouth. There was not one extra groshen to spend on anything. However, since I was dating Basia, our families assumed that I would marry her. Basia's father, a wealthy merchant, agreed to lend my father enough money to see me through my first year of studies. At the same time, Tamara delayed her impending marriage to Lippa, and took a job so that she could send me some money.

However, Poland had strict control of currency for export. I had to convince the Polish authorities that I would not take money out of the country. It was a Catch 22, because later I had to convince the French authorities that I could take out enough money to support me in France. I found a way to solve both of these problems. I went to a local bank, and showed them the envelopes in which famous Jewish writers, such as Sholem Asch and David Pinsky, had sent dollar donations to my father for the half-starving teachers in his Yiddish school. In the past I had saved these envelopes because they had interesting stamps and pretty red wax seals. I told the bank manager that the dollars were being sent from America for my tuition, and I asked him for a statement allowing my father to forward money to France. Later I showed the same statement to the French Consul. Thus, I killed two birds with one stone.

I was accepted for admission into the electrical engineering program at the Institute Electrotechnique in Grenoble in France. My birth certificate, and my papers were in order. All documents had to be translated into French, and notarized by special notaries. In order to go abroad, I also needed a passport and a visa. Obtaining them was more easily said than done.

It was usual in Poland for functionaries, even minor ones to lord it over people, especially Jews. They would humiliate, degrade and threaten anyone who came before them. They asked me to fill out countless numbers of forms. Every time I came to an office, they sent me to another office. The man behind the desk would be

reading his paper, or smoking, or eating a sandwich while I was standing there. He wouldn't even let me sit down. He would say, "What do you want? Come back tomorrow. Don't bother me. I am busy. I am tired today." It was such an ordeal to get a passport.

I was told that it was like this in Czarist Russia. The bureaucrats bowed and groveled before their superiors, but abused and tormented those whom they were supposed to serve. I have spoken with Jews from other parts of Poland, some of whom had friendlier relationships with Poles, but it was not that way in Vilna. It was a very oppressive life.

The bureaucratic runaround with my passport and visa took six months. The school semester in France started in September, but my papers and visa were not ready until early December. Thus I missed the first three months of classes, with disastrous consequences.

My plan to study engineering in France was hopelessly naive, and riddled with fatal flaws. First of all, I did not know any French. I had little aptitude for engineering, and I didn't even like it. I registered three months late for classes. Later I found out that I did not even have the prerequisite courses. I didn't foresee that I would have barely enough money for room and board, let alone for books, for tutors, or for purchasing the notes of previous courses, which might have helped me. But before I left Vilna, I was blissfully unaware of all this.

I wanted to leave Vilna in order to experience the world beyond. I did not know what a cold, cold world was awaiting me in France, to be followed by years of hiding, running, and incarceration. But in the end I was to be spared the massacre at Ponary, which consumed the Jews of Vilna. My decision to study engineering in France turned out to be life-saving, as did so many other decisions which at first seemed ill-advised.

Before I left home, a very rich man offered me a great deal of money, in American hundred dollar bills, more than enough to finance my education. In return he wanted me to smuggle out \$40,000, and deposit it in a French bank for him. He trusted me because of my father's reputation. I was tempted. But if the money had been found on me, I would have been sent to prison for life. When I refused the offer, he said, "You are probably right not to do it. Now let me give you some free advice. Don't

ever come back." It was the summer of 1938. The handwriting was on the wall. The Munich Pact, which sold out Czechoslovakia to appease Hitler, had just been signed. In less than a year, World War II would begin.

My father suggested that I ask the Rabbi across the street to give me his blessing before I left. His blessing was, "Ve timtsa chen be enay anashim. You should find favor in the eyes of people." I recalled Manya's blessing, "Woman will love you," The Rabbi's invocation has also come true. People generally do like me. Even in the darkest hours of my struggle to survive, there were always those who helped me.

My last days in Vilna were spent with Manya. I spent little time at home. My own feelings of departure and loss were well suppressed. Only later did I realize how profound my loss would be.

During the days before my departure, I was very cocky. I said to my family, "Just give me a few hundred francs. Then I can go away and never come back, and I don't need anybody." I felt that I could do anything if I put my mind to it, at least intellectually. If Einstein's theory had to be rediscovered, I could do it. I was bright and well-read, but above all I had just had my first sexual experience, with Manya.

I had never taken care of myself at home, except to clean my shoes and make my bed. If for example I wanted a cup of tea, my mother, my sister, my grandmother or the maid would pour it for me. In view of this, my mother packed my valise. She put in some fruit, some hard Jewish sausages, wild strawberry preserves, and little notes of explanation. Later when I opened my valise, I found the neat little packages, with the labels and notes. I felt such pangs of remorse at the way I had treated her that I wrote long affectionate letters to my parents every day, telling them about my experiences in France.

I spent my last day in Vilna saying goodbye to Manya instead of being with my family. I came home only a few hours before I had to leave. Just before my departure, I said to my mother with the pompous arrogance of a seventeen-year-old, "When you see me off at the station, don't cry. My friends will be there and it would not look nice. It would embarrass me."

That night I took the midnight train to Warsaw. My mother, my father, my sister Tamara, Lippa, Manya and my friends were all there to see me off. I can still see my

mother's face now, white as a sheet. She did not cry. I boarded the train. The whistle blew and the train started. That was the last time I ever saw her. It was December 1938, a few days before my eighteenth birthday.

I never returned to Vilna. I never saw any of them again. It is hard to believe that they were all wiped out. It is hard to believe that today I am much older than my father was when he was murdered. I am even older than my grandparents were.

Part II: The Infamy of France

1. School Days in Grenoble: The First Year.

The train to Warsaw was carrying me away forever from all that was familiar and dear to me, into a new and alien world. For the first time, I was completely on my own. I settled uneasily into a corner of my compartment, keeping a wary eye on the other occupants. Two Polish youths were busy consuming a huge bottle of vodka. They were effusively friendly. Apparently it did not occur to them that I was a Jew. In response to their questions, I told them I was going to France to study. They offered to share their bottle with me, and I accepted a drink. The ride passed pleasantly.

In Warsaw, some friends of my parents met me at the station, and took me to their home, where I spent the night sleeping on the floor. The next day they brought me to the French Consulate to apply for a student visa. The Consul asked me many questions in French. I did not understand them, but I got their gist, because I had anticipated them. Why did I want to study in France? How would I be supported? What were my long range plans after graduation?

I knew that he was trying to find out whether I knew enough French to succeed as a student. I also knew that France did not welcome foreign engineers, or for that matter any immigrants. Therefore, after each question I gave the same prepared speech. I kept saying that after graduation I would return to Poland to build electronic factories. It was obvious to him that my French were inadequate, but he was impressed by my enthusiasm.

To convince him that Poland would allow my father to send money abroad, I showed him the letter from the bank in Vilna. It stated that my education would be financed by dollar donations from several famous American Yiddish writers. My father would convert the dollars to zlotys, and send them to me. This of course was fiction, but it persuaded him to grant me the visa.

The trip from Warsaw to Grenoble took two nights and three days. We had to cross Germany. As we moved westward across Europe, our passports were checked at every stop. At the German border, the officious Polish personnel left the train, to be replaced by their officious German counterparts. I had been warned not to leave my compartment while in transit through Germany. As soon as we crossed the French

border, a French crew boarded the train. The climate became noticeably more friendly. They were there to serve the travelers, and not to oppress them.

The customs inspection at the French border was perfunctory. I could easily have smuggled money into France, as the rich gentleman had asked me to do. But perhaps if I had carried the money, I would have been so nervous as to arouse suspicion. As it was, I looked and felt innocent.

In Grenoble, a student named Sasha Kamen (**Picture**) met me at the station and took me home with him. He was the boy friend of one of Basia's friends. I was so exhausted from the long trip that I slept for 24 hours. Then he helped me to find a room. I rented an attic room in the home of an Italian bricklayer several kilometers from the town. My window faced east. Each morning I saw the rising sun turn the glaciers and mountain peaks into glittering jewels. Even in summer the mountains were covered with snow. At sundown, they reflected the dazzling colors of the western sky. They left me breathless. A feeling of exhilaration would sweep over me whenever I looked out the window. When Spring came, I could pick ripe cherries from the tree just beneath my window.

Grenoble in those days was a sleepy little university town nestled in a valley in the Alps. I saw it again more recently, a horrible factory town. There was a small mountain in the center of town. A teleferique, or cable car took you to a lookout point on the mountain top, which afforded a magnificent view of the city and the surrounding mountains. The valley was protected, so that even in winter, the flowers and trees were in full bloom. Sometimes the snow would fall while the roses were still blooming. It was another world.

Many of the foreign students were from wealthy families. They represented many nationalities, including Jews, Arabs, Orientals, and Europeans. Most of them lived in the international house, where rooms were expensive. Many were playboys, looking for a good time. They did not come to study. Instead they amused themselves by playing cards, drinking and dancing. They were admitted to the school only because they had matrum certificates, and could afford the tuition.

Before I arrived in France, I was naively unaware of the kind of program in which I had enrolled. Once there, I received a rude shock. The school offered a three-year program of advanced courses. It turned out highly trained engineers, in specialties

required by the Paris Metro. Most of the students had spent three or four years in technical schools acquiring the basic knowledge. The program was rigorous, and inflexible. Every week there were papers to write, and tests to take. There was a semifinal at midterm, and a final at the end of the year. If you failed a final, you had another chance to pass it after the summer vacation. Otherwise, you had to repeat the whole course. Many students dropped out during the first year, but the school authorities seemed unconcerned about the high attrition rate. The dropouts were readily replaced by new students.

My troubles began as soon as I arrived. In the first place, I did not know any French. I could not even buy food or ask directions from my room to the university. When I went home after dark, I frequently got lost.

Secondly, I could not follow the course work. I lacked any knowledge of advanced physics, advanced mathematics, chemistry and mechanical drawing, which were the prerequisites for my courses. Although I had been one of the best physics and mathematics students in Vilna, those courses were on a high school level, and they had never really captured my interest. In addition to that, I had missed the first three months of classes in Grenoble. I was totally lost.

Clearly I didn't belong there. I had as much aptitude for engineering as for singing in the opera, and even less interest in it. I really disliked engineering. Instead, I was passionately devoted to languages, literature and the arts. I had been admitted to the school on the basis of my maturum, and my presumed ability to pay the tuition. My high grades had also been a factor.

Thirdly, I had barely enough money for room, board and tuition, let alone for books and supplies. I needed tutoring but could not afford it. I could not buy the notes of previous courses, which would have helped me. I was ostracized by the wealthy Jewish students. When I asked several of them to lend me their books, they refused, saying I might steal them. I told them I would study in their room, where they could keep an eye on me. They said they did not want me sitting around in their room. Some of them never even opened their books.

I had no experience with the laboratory apparatus. In one laboratory, I had to operate a motor-generator system. When I turned it on, the motor began to go faster and faster, until it was out of control. I had no idea what to do. I threw every lever, and

pressed every button, but the infernal machine would not stop. I was terrified. Soon the runaway motor began to fragment and fly apart, and the resulting short circuit looked and sounded like an artillery barrage. I was afraid it would blow up the building. Finally a teaching assistant dashed in, and threw a switch, which contained the explosion. This episode shattered what little self-confidence I still possessed.

I did not even know what a technical drawing was. When asked to draw an electrical component, I drew an artistic rendition of it. The teaching assistant was furious. He mistook me for one of the rich, good-time boys who were always clowning around. After a while, I found a friend who had a tutor in technical drawing. I listened in, and learned just enough to get by. But I was not learning any French. I did not understand that when somebody said "tout droit," it meant "straight" and not "a droit," "to the right."

I tried very hard to study the course material. With the help of a big Polish dictionary, I tried to read the text books. I even tried to translate them into Polish. It didn't work. The language barrier was too great. I did not understand any of the technical words. Most of them were not in the dictionary. All around me, other students were dropping out and returning home. However, I persisted. I studied nearly all night, with only a few hours sleep. I would keep my feet in ice cold water to stay awake.

I was persistent, but God! I had the shit kicked out of me. I found out that I was not as smart as I had thought. My cockiness vanished very rapidly. I was in deep trouble, and I needed help. There was no way that I could write home about it, and thus add to my parents' burdens. I tried to present a cheerful picture to them. Since I was corresponding with Manya, I finally told her my troubles. She responded that there was nothing she could do for me, and that she wanted me to stand on my own feet. She also said that since we could not conduct a love affair by letter, we would have to end our relationship. I cried a lot that winter. I had no place to turn.

I longed to feel safe and protected again. I missed my family, and I felt very guilty about my cavalier treatment of them. To make up for the wrong I had done them, I wrote them a six or seven page letter every day.

Since I had little money for food, I subsisted for a while on the preserves and sausages which I had brought from home. Finally I became so weak and sick that I

fell off the bed and could not get back on. I started to buy leftover produce in the market at the end of the day --- tomatoes, bananas, and lemons which were partly spoiled. I would mash them up together, and eat them with a spoon while I studied.

I bought a dilapidated bicycle to convey me back and forth between my room and school. I repaired and painted it. It was an Italian bicycle, with a flashlight powered by a dynamo. One evening on my way home after dark, the light stopped working. A gendarme stopped me, and gave me a ticket to appear in court. He sternly advised me to plead guilty, or it might go badly for me. So I did. The judge fined me one gold franc. At first, I thought that was not so bad. Then I learned that a gold franc was equal to three hundred regular francs, which was my entire budget for two months. My room cost a hundred francs a month, and food cost fifty or sixty francs. I had to cut down on food for a long time to pay off the fine.

I went for a bicycle ride in the mountains, walking uphill and coasting down. In spite of my troubles, I was elated with a sense of freedom. Here, there were no gangs chasing me to beat me up. But I was not skilled in using the hand brakes. As I coasted down the winding road, with its hairpin turns, I flew off the road, damaging the bicycle, and tearing my clothes. I was lucky not to break any bones.

One day I was riding my bicycle through the city streets. I turned a corner, and a car came into view, careening down the wrong side of the street. We had a head-on collision. I was injured, and I fell off the bicycle. My chin hit the flashlight and broke it. The wheels of the car stopped only inches from my throat. The driver emerged, and gave me a drink of brandy. He said it was my fault, and then he took off. I didn't know anything about insurance, or lawyers. I managed to find a physician who took a few stitches in my chin, but I had no money to pay him. The loss of the bicycle was devastating to me. I still have the scar on my chin.

On the day of my accident, I received a telegram from home. This was entirely out of character. My family never sent telegrams, because they were expensive. The message was, "Mother very worried. Please write and say you are all right." In some extraordinary way, she had sensed that I was in danger. It confirmed my belief in ESP.

Occasionally I would get work in a working class restaurant. Students were allowed to work there without a permit, provided they were not paid any money. We received

meals on days that we worked, and chits for meals on other days. I started as a dishwasher and busboy. The restaurant was so busy at mealtimes that there were enormous numbers of dishes. I had to wash the dishes in hot soapy water, and rinse them in cold water. The skin on my hands dried out, and began to split and redden. It was very hard work.

Finally I asked to try out as a waiter. A waiter earned more chits than a kitchen worker, and I thought the work might be easier and more interesting. The first day I started by breaking a few dishes. Then the patrons at one table ordered six bowls of soup. I loaded them all onto one tray. As I was serving them, the tray tilted, and I spilled the hot soup on a customer. Everyone was very nice about it, but that ended my career as a waiter.

This turned out to be a stroke of luck. I became an assistant to the cook, preparing vegetables, and cleaning pots. She took a liking to me, and fed me with the choicest leftovers. She was an elderly woman, who had been living with a Spanish man for 20 years. When I asked her why she did not get married, she said, "What, and spoil a good thing?"

I had a friend, a Latvian Jew named Nicolas, who had formerly been a student in Grenoble. He was tall and lean, with a little mustache. I used to find him sitting in the café, playing poker or sipping an aperitif with the students. He was a chain smoker, addicted to cigarettes, which he rolled himself to save money. He told me that he had left school a few years earlier to fight in the International Brigade against the Fascists in Spain. He had been severely wounded in the stomach, and was in constant pain from his wounds. He used to burp a lot because of his wound, and he would joke about it, saying "Ep. Ep, Epstein."

Nicolas and I followed the progress of the Civil War in Spain. The Fascists were winning, thanks to massive military aid from Germany and Italy. England, France and the United States remained "neutral," by declaring an arms embargo against both sides. Only the Soviet Union furnished arms and materiel to the beleaguered Republican government. Thus, the outcome was preordained. In March 1939, the three-year war finally ended in victory for the Fascists.

From Nicolas, I learned about the treatment of the Spanish war refugees by the French government. Many of them fled across the Pyrenees Mountains, to seek

asylum in France. The French government under Deladier quickly rounded them up, and imprisoned them in a concentration camp called Argeles, on the Spanish border. At that time I could not imagine that I would eventually be confined in Argeles, and experience the brutal treatment described by Nicolas.

These men, women and children were herded together like animals, without sanitary facilities, and with very little food. They slept on the bare sandy ground, unprotected from the elements. They died by the hundreds from exposure, from starvation and thirst, from wounds and from disease. They were buried under about two feet of sand. By the time I was imprisoned in Argeles, their bones were protruding through the ground.

When Argeles became overcrowded, new refugees were locked up in the sports hippodrome or coliseum in Grenoble. Thus, the students of Grenoble became aware of their plight. Although some of us had very little, we would offer them food and drink through the barbed wire fences.

Nicolas had been imprisoned in Argeles. He and some of the men had sneaked out, and stolen a cow, which they brought back to feed the other prisoners. The French guards were furious. To vent their fury, they tortured the perpetrators. Some of the men did not survive the torture. In Nicolas' case, they pinned him to the ground, lying on his back in spread-eagle fashion, and held him down with wooden stakes. They left him there in the rain and sun, for three days. He barely survived.

At some point, the inmates of Argeles were told that all the able-bodied men would be shipped to Africa, to build the Trans-Saharan Highway. The women and children were to remain in camp. When the women demonstrated to protest their separation from the men, the French guards machine-gunned hundreds of them.

Nicolas was excused from service in Africa because of his poor physical condition. By some lucky accident, he was released from the camp. He drifted back to Grenoble, but his life experience had so crippled him emotionally that he could no longer study. He was the oldest "student" in our group.

Eventually Nicolas met a sad fate. After the German invasion of northern France, the French police in the southern unoccupied zone collaborated with the Gestapo by rounding up foreign Jews for deportation to German concentration camps. They

ransacked the room where Nicolas lived. His landlady had hastily hidden him in the basement, where he could hear the police moving and talking in his room. In his rush to hide, he had grabbed only a little bit of tobacco, and cigarette paper. He sat in the basement until it got dark. Finally he heard them leave. He waited a while to make sure they had gone. Then, his desire for a cigarette became so strong that he returned to his room. He turned on the light for just an instant, to find his tobacco. The gendarmes were waiting for him outside the building. One of them saw the light, and returned to arrest him. He died in a German concentration camp.

Some years later, when I was in Switzerland, I wrote an article telling Nicolas' story. It was called, "For a Package of Tobacco." To Nicolas, tobacco had become the essence, the meaning of his life. Yet it was for a package of tobacco that he lost his life. I sold the story to a daily newspaper, which published it. I received many letters expressing sympathy for Nicolas.

When the academic year ended in the spring of 1939, I had managed to learn some of the subject matter, but I still did not know much French. Since I did not understand many of the questions on my written exams, I answered each question by writing everything I knew that was remotely related to the subject. Thus I managed to squeeze out some points, even though I did not pass. The oral exams were a different story. In answering one question, I wanted to describe the role of oxygen in blood, but I forgot the word for blood. So I said "l'eau rouge," which means red water. The professor was so angry that he threw me out of the room, shouting, "These damn foreign students just come here to fool around. They cut their classes, and then show up for their exams. Why do they come here?"

I failed my exams. It was a humiliating experience, because I had always been an excellent student. I had been hoping to go home for the summer, but under the circumstances I had to stay in France, to study engineering, and to learn French. Anyway, I had no money for travel. This probably saved my life. That summer, Hitler's hordes were poised to invade Poland. Those students who went home were caught in the maelstrom. When the Germans invaded their towns and cities, they were killed. This was another of the many times in my life when an apparent disaster proved to be a blessing.

2. The Summer of 1939

School was out. I would have to take the exams again in September. In order to immerse myself in French, I decided to hitchhike through France. Since I had never seen the sea, I headed for the Côte d'Azur. I chose the picturesque Route des Alpes, which the Romans under Hannibal had built to transport their elephants across the Alps. During a battle, the elephants would scare the enemy soldiers by trampling them, and throwing them into the air. I chose this scenic route, although it would have been much easier to get rides on the busy highway.

War was in the air. Sympathy for Poland was at its height. I exploited the situation by telling everyone I was a Polish student. It was obvious that I had very little money. When I stayed overnight in small towns, the townspeople gave me food, and let me sleep in their garages and barns. Occasionally I was invited into their homes.

Most of my rides lasted only one or two hours. It took me many days to cross the Alps and to reach Nice. Toward the end of the trip, I spent a few precious francs, and took a bus for the last few kilometers to Nice. I arrived tired, unshaven and unwashed. There at the local youth hostel, I arranged to help out in the kitchen in exchange for room and board.

When I saw the ocean, I freaked out. The water was as blue as in a bad picture postcard, and the sand was a brilliant gold. It looked totally unreal. I walked around Nice in shorts, barefoot and without a shirt. I sunbathed on the cement blocks and rocks in the port of Nice. To protect myself against sunburn, I applied cheap olive oil to my skin. In those days we didn't know about skin cancer. I kept turning to expose myself uniformly, so that I acquired a deep tan.

I watched the beautiful people promenade in their elegant clothes and jewelry, surrounded by clouds of expensive perfume. I envied them their luxurious lives and their sumptuous meals. I envied them their magnificent cars. It looked to me like a wonderful life. One evening, I was sitting on a bench, writing a letter home. A man sat down next to me, and started a conversation. "Do you think these women are beautiful?" I nodded in the affirmative. "Would you like to have one?" Again I nodded. "You know, a lot of them are very sick. Some men prefer men to women." I realized that he was a homosexual man trying to pick me up. A feeling of nausea and disgust flooded through me.

I wrote home describing my impressions of Nice. My prose was romantic and full of feeling. I wanted so much to have my parents experience the world that they would never see, through my eyes. I also described my meeting with the homosexual man, to illustrate the seamy side of life in this exotic place. My father was impressed with my letter. He sent it to the daily Yiddish newspaper, *Undzer Tag*, which printed it. It was the first time my writing had been published. I was very proud of it.

Years later, I told a friend about this incident, and about my feelings of disgust. My friend said, "Did you ever think of what it must have meant to this man, to take a chance, to expose himself and to be rejected like that?" I had to admit that it had never occurred to me. In my practice, I have worked with many homosexuals. I thought that I wasn't prejudiced. But clearly I must have been prejudiced to have overlooked this man's point of view. I felt very sad about the way I had treated him.

The director of the youth hostel would occasionally give me tickets to the theater and the casino. I dressed up as well as I could. The casino in Nice was very shabby. Its patrons were blue collar workers, hoping to win a few francs with which to improve their dreary lives. It was a sad place, not exciting or glamorous, as depicted in the movies.

In the youth hostel I met young people from many countries. They had come to Nice by bicycle, by hitchhiking or by train. I got into a discussion with some Englishmen about what their citizenship meant. I envied them their British passports, which permitted them to travel anywhere without obstacles, and without visas. When I told them this, they could not understand it. After all, they were just as poor as I was. I said if I could have either a British passport or \$10,000, I would choose the passport. With it I could travel freely to any part of the British Commonwealth. I wouldn't need a visa to study in France, and I could easily get a work permit. In my circumstances, with a Polish passport and a student visa, I was not allowed to work. Only someone from a country like Poland, whose citizens nobody wanted, could understand what a British passport meant.

I met a girl, whom I dated a few times. Her home was in Paris. I wanted to go to Paris, to visit my grandmother's sister, i. e. my great-aunt. So I persuaded her to hitchhike to Paris with me. We tried the time-honored routine for hitchhiking. She would show her legs, and thumb down a car, while I would hide in the bushes. The idea was that when the car stopped for the pretty girl, I would emerge, and the car

would take both of us. That way, I would be there to protect her from an abusive driver.

It worked up to a point, but it was slow. Some drivers would take off as soon as they saw me. She had very little money, and could not afford to spend too many nights on the road. So one third of the way to Paris, we parted and she hitched a ride by herself. We made a date to meet in Paris.

I continued to hitch by myself, very slowly. At one point, I met a man in a fancy car. He had just won a large sum of money at the roulette wheel in Monaco. He drove through the mountains at high speed, and I became carsick. I must have turned green. He stopped the car, and I went outside and threw up.

Later that day we stopped again, and he treated me to lunch. We ate in a very elegant restaurant. There were at least one waiter and several bus boys serving each of us. The table was set with a vast array of silver knives, forks and spoons, each one intended for a different course. The glasses were of fine crystal. The food and the wines were delicious. I was in shorts, unshaven, tired, and unwashed. I must have been a sight! After lunch we continued on the road. A short time later, the car broke down. He had to leave it in a garage overnight waiting for a part. That was the end of my ride with him.

It took me a week to reach Paris. My last hitch was with a Catholic priest driving a horse and wagon. To someone of my background, he was a most unlikely companion. I was entranced with Paris. I still think it is the most beautiful city in the world. Rome or London does not compare with it, nor any other city in the US or Europe.

My great-aunt was delighted to see me. She fussed over me, and plied me with delicacies. She would go to the “shtetl” or Jewish Section of Paris, to buy the best cuts of meat, which she cooked for me. She wasn’t much of a cook. Today the Jewish Section is very popular. The Picasso Museum is there, and the prices of those old apartments are sky high.

My great-aunt lived with her daughter, her son-in-law and a grandson, in a suburb called Courbovoie, far from the center of Paris. Her daughter and son-in-law made a living delivering soap, cologne and other toiletries to outdoor markets in little towns

around Paris. They also sold these items in flea markets. They worked very hard loading, driving and unloading the trucks. They had to be familiar with their merchandise, and know how to sell it to the public. Their booths opened very early. They would start work at four in the morning, and return home for dinner by eight or nine at night.

Whenever my great-aunt's daughter had some spare cash, she would buy a gold coin at a money-changing office. She had a small fortune in gold coins acquired one-at-a-time in this fashion. She would hide them around the house in boxes, or sewn into her underwear. Apparently she didn't trust the banks.

Her husband was an educated man. He was the son of a rabbi, and an ordained rabbi himself, but he worked as an ordinary laborer. His wife despised him for being a poor salesman and an inept worker. She constantly nagged and criticized him. The poor man did not have a moment's peace. I was not used to such domestic discord, and found it very unpleasant. They were coarse people, not at all like my family. To make matters worse, they expected me to earn my keep. They put me to work in their booths and on their trucks. At night I slept on their floor, and shared my bed with clouds of fleas, which ate me alive.

So after a few days, I told them I had really come to see Paris. I had very little money, and of course they didn't offer to help me. Every day I would walk from their home to the Metro, which took about an hour. The Metro ride cost about a franc, and took me to the center of Paris. I would walk eight or ten hours a day, devouring Paris with my senses. I became familiar with all sections of the city. I was not afraid to get lost, because there was always a subway station nearby, and the directions were very clear. Occasionally I would buy a baguette. When I was thirsty, I would spend a quarter of a franc for a cold drink. But otherwise, I was saving my money for more interesting adventures. Once, late at night, I decided to save the Metro fare by walking all the way to my great-aunt's home. It took six hours.

That summer the air was filled with ominous rumblings of war. The Ribbentrop-Stalin Pact had been signed. While in Paris I witnessed the last celebration of "Quatorze Juillet," i.e. the Fourteenth of July or Bastille Day, before the Nazi hordes swarmed over France. It seemed to me that the crowds were smaller than expected, and their celebration was muted, and tinged with sadness. It was more like

a funeral than a celebration. There was very little cheering or applause. Many spectators were crying. Prime Minister Deladier passed through the streets in his motorcar, waving his hands. I saw the Hussars on their horses, the Foreign Legion, and the whole military parade. Along the Champs Elysée, the loudest shouts of "Vive la France" came from the whores, hanging from trees or balconies to get a better view. They were hysterical with patriotic fervor. It sent eerie shivers up and down my spine. In the evening, there were lights, music and dancing in the streets. I danced, and I drank wine, which somebody gave me. But the end was in sight.

I looked up my French girl friend. She and her parents were delighted to receive me. She said to me, "Tu es un fils de Moïse?" "Are you a son of Moses?" It turned out they were Jewish. This expression, "son of Moses," was a euphemism for the word Jew, which they were ashamed to use. Another euphemism which they used was the word Israelite. But our relationship did not last long. I could not afford to take her out in style, because I wanted my money to last all summer. Anyway she was busy with her friends.

The Tabac magazines on the newsstands were advertising the Folies-Bergère, with intriguing photos of half-naked women. I borrowed a jacket and tie from my great-aunt's son-in-law, and went to see the Folies. I ate lightly for a few days, in order to save some money, with which I bought a ticket for standing room. However, under pressure from the ticket agent, I also bought a program. It cost half again as much as my ticket, and it turned out to be completely useless. When the curtain went up, the lights on the stage, the gorgeous women with bare breasts, with furs and feathers and flowers, were an incredible spectacle to me, a teenager from Vilna. Having satisfied my longing to see the Folies, I proceeded to find other things to do in Paris that did not cost so much money.

I spent a lovely summer exploring Paris on foot, and acquiring some basic knowledge of French. When I returned to Grenoble in the fall, I was able to pass my exams, not with great honor, but by squeaking through. I also began to do better in my course work.

3, My Call to Arms

In the meantime, world-shaking events were overtaking us. On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded western Poland, and quickly overran it with tanks. Immediately, France and England declared war on Germany, in compliance with their mutual

defense treaties with Poland. The French moved up to the Maginot line, and the Droit de Guerre was declared, meaning that France was in a state of war. The government issued the first food ration cards.

Up to now, England and France had turned a blind eye to Hitler's military escapades and human rights atrocities. The Western Powers, including the United States, preferred the Nazis to the Communists. In retrospect it is clear that the US, England and France had hoped that Hitler would attack and overrun Russia. Therefore when the Allies declared war on Germany for attacking Poland, they took no action. The war in Western Europe had not yet started.

However, the war in Poland was having a profound effect on my family in Vilna. Lippa, my sister's fiancé, was promptly mobilized into the Polish army, and sent to the front. The Poles dispatched their cavalry against the German tanks, and it was annihilated. Lippa became a prisoner of war. Warsaw was bombed into submission. The Soviet Union invaded Poland from the east, and promptly ceded it to Lithuania.

Once again, Vilna became the capital of Lithuania, under the name Vilnius. My parents were now Lithuanian subjects. As such, they were no longer able to send me any money. However, they were still able to correspond with me through a contact in Switzerland. Out of deference to their Soviet allies, the Germans released all prisoners who came from the part of Poland under Soviet occupation. Lippa returned home from a prisoner of war camp, and he and Tamara were married. I received a letter signed by all the guests at their wedding.

I still feel guilty about the fact that they would have married a year earlier, if she had not postponed her marriage to work and send me money. They had so little time to be happy, a mere two years, before they were murdered at Ponary.

The Polish Army in Exile was organized in France, and I received a draft notice. I wanted very much to fight the Germans, but not in the Polish Army. As a student, I was eligible for officers' candidate school. But I knew the dismal record of the Polish Army with regard to Jews. They had no Jewish officers. They would keep them in officers' school for a week or a month, and then expel them on some pretext. The Jewish recruits would then be ordinary enlisted men, subject to persecution by their anti-Semitic officers. They would have made my life unbearable.

I passed my pre-induction physical, and was classified as fit to serve. I was desperate. I tried to enlist in the French Army, but the French said I had my own Polish Army, and they would not take me. They would have taken me into the Foreign Legion, not for the normal term of service, but for the duration of the war. It is true that when I left Vilna, I had planned to join the Foreign Legion after finishing my studies, but I had since learned more about life in the Legion. It would have been an onerous burden for me. I thought the war might go on for ten years. Therefore, I did not join the Legion.

Time was suspended while I waited to be called. I corresponded with my parents through our contact in Switzerland. So far, the Soviets had not bothered them, and they had continued to teach in their school. Their letters were censored, so that they could not write much about what was going on in Vilna. Meantime, they were no longer able to send me any money. I was cut off from my base of support, as were all the Polish students, including the wealthy ones.

It was still illegal for someone on a student visa to work in France. I took a job with a construction crew, carrying bricks on the scaffolding to the highest floors. The foreman knew I was a student working without a legal permit, and he agreed to pay me in cash. It was backbreaking work, and I wasn't used to it. It was also dangerous. I had to be careful not to fall down from the very high floors. The pay was minimal. After ten days, I asked him for some money. He told me that I was working illegally, and if I didn't get out, he would call the police. Neither my heartfelt pleas nor my bloodied callused hands could move him to let me stay.

I returned to my job at the workers' restaurant. But now there were so many Polish students competing for the few jobs, that I could not get enough meal chits. So I went to the French Army barracks with another student, and spoke to the officers. We told them that we were waiting to be drafted into the Polish Army in Exile, to fight alongside the French, and that in the meantime we were starving. We asked them if they could feed us. They talked it over, and decided to help us. Eight of us went to eat our meals in the French army mess hall. The French soldiers were very well-fed. In the barracks, we dined on very good steaks, french fries, chicken, bread, soups, sauces and wines. They always had food left over, which they normally threw away. Now they permitted us to take the leftovers home. Thus, we were able to feed about twenty-five friends on the outside. This kept us going for quite a while.

I knew that sooner or later, I would receive an induction notice for the Polish Army. If they ever got their hands on me, I would face disaster. So I kept urging my parents to get me a Lithuanian passport, so that I could not be inducted into the Polish Army. But even with such a passport, I would be in mortal danger, as long as I stayed in France. I knew that Germany would soon attack and overrun France. I believed that I had a better chance for survival in Lithuania. It was time for me to go home.

But my parents discouraged me. They could not tell me explicitly what was happening in Vilna, because the mail was censored, but they wrote a cryptic message, "People here think that your apartment is much better than our apartment." I gathered that things were bad for them in Vilna. So I had to find another way out of France.

I was doing much better in my studies. There were many changes in daily living under the Droit de Guerre. Food was rationed. The dance halls and dancing schools were closed, because it was considered unseemly to dance while France was in a state of war. The Italian bricklayer whose attic I had rented was mobilized into the army, and he asked me to leave. He didn't want a young man in the house with his young wife, while he was away.

The physician who had stitched me up after my bicycle accident was also called into the army. His wife looked me up, and tried to collect his fee. With a great deal of effort, I found the home of the driver whose car had injured me. He had already left for military service, and his wife refused to give me any money. I was unable to pay my bill. But I had a more serious problem than defaulting on a medical bill. Vilna had been occupied by the Soviet Army, and my parents could no longer send me money.

I moved into a rented room with my friend Grisha Chvatzskin. **PICTURE** He was a baker's son from Kovno, Lithuania. His father had been supporting him in grand style, but now the funding had stopped. He was not a serious engineering student. His two favorite pastimes were playing poker, and visiting bordellos. He was a very good poker player.

I had been living very frugally on money from the previous year, and I had saved enough to pay the rent. Grisha had received much more money than I had, but he had spent it all. I had to carry him. One day he sold a gold ring, but instead of contributing to the rent, he went to the whorehouse. I was very upset with him.

Doing the laundry was a problem. Our rented room had no running water, and there were no washing machines in town. I noticed a sign advertising a low-cost laundry service. I went to the address, and rang the bell. A good-looking young woman greeted me in a very suggestive way, and asked me what I wanted. She invited me to come in. When I pointed to the laundry, she giggled with suppressed mirth. She told me I could leave it there, and pick it up the next day. Embarrassed and shy, I left in a hurry.

I went home and told my roommate Grisha that I found such a nice place to do laundry, but that the young woman there had seemed inexplicably amused by me. He asked me the address. When I told him, he broke down laughing. It turned out that it was the whorehouse. In their business, they had to do a great deal of laundry, and it was easy for them to run a small laundry service on the side. I must have been the only student in Grenoble who didn't know the location of the whorehouse. When the word got around that Salik had unwittingly brought his laundry to the whorehouse, I was the laughing stock of all the students.

The French people are not burdened with American Puritanism. In Grenoble, prostitutes were an integral part of the community. They were practicing a legitimate profession that met the needs of their clients. They attended church on Sunday. They often attended theatrical performances, where they were cordially greeted by their patrons. Groups of students out on the town would gather in front of the whorehouse, and regale them with songs. During parades, the student orchestra never failed to stop in front of the whorehouse and serenade the ladies of pleasure. The café had a whore in residence. If she was busy, the owner, who was herself a former whore, would volunteer to help out. Her former pimp, now her husband, was in charge of the cash register.

Three momentous events now conspired to shape my destiny. In May 1940, having overrun Belgium and Holland, the German Army circumvented the Maginot Line, and raced on toward Paris. I also received a convocation to report to my unit in the Polish Army, somewhere north of Paris. If I failed to show up, I would be a deserter, who could be shot on sight. Just in time, my parents notified me that a Lithuanian passport would be waiting for me at the consular office in Paris. What they must have gone through to get it I cannot imagine.

4. The Last Train from Paris

I packed my suitcase with all my valuable possessions. These included my maturation certificate, and other official documents, my family photo album, and my grandfather's tallith¹⁴, phylacteries¹⁵, and prayer book. Then I took the train to Paris. I had no money for a train ticket, but I persuaded the conductor to let me ride free, by telling him I was going to join the Polish Army, to fight the Germans. The train was virtually empty. Most people were fleeing in the other direction, away from Paris. By the time I got to Paris, the Polish Army headquarters to the north had already been overrun by the Germans, who were moving rapidly through France, and would enter Paris within a day.

Paris was in a panic. The Germans had released a smoke screen, which hung over the city like a black pall, blotting out the sun and deepening the sense of doom. The scene was chaotic and confused. People were running aimlessly through the streets. There were posted notices instructing people to dig holes to hide from the German bombs. Some shops were looted. Other shops opened their doors and invited the passers-by to help themselves to their merchandise, rather than have the Germans pillage it. People were emptying out the stores.

French officers in uniform were stopping cars and forcing the occupants out at gunpoint in order to make their own escape. People were loading their cars to flee. Others were trying to pay for a ride in a car, any car leaving Paris. The Metro was operating at full capacity, without collecting fares. It was so crowded that I decided to walk. I was carrying all my worldly possessions in my suitcase which weighed about fifty pounds.

With great difficulty, I made my way through that sea of humanity to the Lithuanian embassy. The embassy officials would not give me the time of day. They knew nothing about my passport. The courier with the permit for my passport had not arrived from Switzerland. He had probably decided to stay there, and save his own skin. It was doubtful that he would come.

¹⁴A tallith is a prayer shawl.

¹⁵A phylactery is either of two small black leather tubes containing pieces of parchment, inscribed with specific Biblical verses. They are worn by Orthodox men during weekday morning prayers, one usually strapped to the left arm, and the other to the head above the hairline.

I refused to leave the premises. I showed them the telegram from Lithuania, and said I would not leave until I got my passport. They pushed me out into the street, locked the doors, and made good their own escape. The Germans were now at the gates of Paris.

I made my way to Courbovoie, where my relatives lived. When I arrived, they were just locking up their home and packing their car to flee. It was a small car, with room only for my great-aunt, her daughter and grandson, and some household possessions, including her collection of gold coins. There was no room for me. Her hapless son-in-law was also left behind. As they drove off, I could hear the German heavy artillery.

I learned later that there were such traffic jams on the roads from Paris, that many cars broke down. The others pushed them off the road. The Luftwaffe strafed the fleeing cars, on and off the roads, with machine gun fire. Many civilians were killed. In the mad rush to escape, the roads were strewn with furs, jewelry, pianos, and even a few television sets, hurriedly discarded to make room for extra passengers, or to lighten the load. Later I learned that my great-aunt, her daughter and grandson had managed to reach Toulouse in the south of France, and eventually to make their way to Israel. Her son-in-law died in Auschwitz.

I was not quite 20 years old, and I felt lost, scared, helpless and hopeless. I didn't know what to do. I decided to return to Grenoble, and along with thousands of others, I took the Metro toward the Gar de Lyons railroad station. When I was still far from the station, the Metro stopped running. I pushed my way through the crowds in the streets, still dragging my valise. Hours later I reached the station.

In the movie Casablanca, there is a scene in the railroad station in Paris. The last train before the Germans enter Paris is about to leave. You can hear the German artillery pounding the environs of Paris. In the movie, Humphrey Bogart and Hoagy Carmichael are waiting for Ingrid Bergman to join them, so that they can all escape together. The station is bustling with what appears to be a normal rush-hour crowd. They wait for her until the last moment, but she fails to show up. Then they board the train.

I was on the last train from Paris. It was nothing like the scene in the movie. A howling mob of at least a hundred thousand people was trying to get into the station. They were camping in the streets. It was rumored that there were no more trains

running. The French army was in retreat, and the Germans were entering Paris. There was talk about declaring Paris an open city.

Only one station entrance was open. It was strictly reserved for French soldiers in uniform, and their dependents. I spoke to some French officers, and I showed them my draft notice for the Polish Army in Exile. They said the last train from Paris was about to leave. They had found a place in the locomotive, but there would be no room for me.

In desperation, I decided to improvise. I approached a man in the crowd, and said I would pay him to carry my valise. Together we walked to the entrance. I acted very important. I flashed my draft notice, which was written in Polish, and had an official stamp from the Polish Consulate. I said, "I am from the Polish Consulate. I have important papers here, which must be delivered to the government in Vichy. I must get on that train." The official guarding the entrance could not read Polish, and in the confusion, he let us in.

The last train was leaving the station. It was packed so tightly with military personnel, women and children, that the doors would no longer open. People were lying on top of the cars. You couldn't even get near the train. I saw one of the French officers with whom I had spoken before. He said, "This is the last train from Paris. If you don't get on this one, forget it."

I pushed my way, and dragged my valise to the train. As the train started, I jumped on one of the train steps, grabbed the door handle and hung on with one hand for dear life, while with the other hand I clung to my suitcase. As the train accelerated, I realized that I could not hold on much longer, and that I would soon fall off and be killed. There was a small opening in the window of the door, to provide air for the passengers who were crammed inside. I put my head and hand through the opening, and grabbed the door handle from the inside. I couldn't open the door, because they were packed so tightly inside. I was screaming like an animal that is about to be killed.

My screams prompted one of the passengers to grab my head, and pull me inside by the neck, through the tight opening in the window. Then I was lying on top of the people's heads, still clinging to my suitcase. They screamed, yelled and cursed, but they squeezed together, and by some miracle they made room for me to stand with my

valise. So much for the movie Casablanca, and other movies which purport to record history!

Packed like sardines, we traveled for many hours, until we were halfway across France. The train had to stop at the river Allier near Vichy, because the bridge over the river was already bombed out. We were in a war zone on the outskirts of a small town. It was night, and I was exhausted. I found a child's wagon in an abandoned yard, and wheeled my valise into the town. I crawled into a basement in a deserted house, and fell asleep. During the night I was awakened by bombing, shooting and screaming. The Germans had overrun the area up to the river. The other side of the river was not occupied, and was later to become Vichy France.

I remained hidden in the basement for a few days, without food or water. Then I came out, overcome by hunger and thirst. The Germans immediately picked me up and put me in a work detail. They were rounding up all young people of military age, to open roads and clear away debris. We were housed in abandoned buildings. They gave us some soup. At this time, they didn't try to separate Jews from Gentiles.

That evening, Petain signed an armistice with the Germans. The Germans agreed to halt their advance, and to release all captured French soldiers. In exchange, the French police were to carry out the Nazi policies in Unoccupied France. All our German guards got drunk. They thought the war was over. They celebrated their victory by looting all the stores. They guzzled champagne like animals, and ate fois gras with their hands.

I knew they would soon start segregating the Jews for deportation. I made a deal to cross the river with a local fellow, who knew the area. With his help, I found a small rowboat and put our luggage into it. The boat was too small to carry us, and so we swam across the river pushing the boat ahead of us. A few guards shot at us, but it was dark, and they were drunk.

5. Trapped in Vichy France:

We came ashore in a small town near Vichy. It was swamped with refugees, who were being lodged in the local schoolhouse. Once on shore I passed out. I must have been unconscious for a day or two. When I regained consciousness, I was very ill, and burning with fever. Over the next few weeks, I was nursed back to health by a beautiful young Belgian girl named Colette, and her parents. They were farmers, who

had fled when the Germans invaded Belgium. Without their tender loving care I probably would not have survived.

Colette was about sixteen years old. She fell in love with me. When I got well, her parents offered to take me back to Belgium with them, and to teach me farming. They said that for them the war was over. Although Belgium was occupied by German troops, they could still continue to farm. Her parents suggested that in a few years, Colette and I could get married. I told them that I had to go back to school. I also knew that as a Jew, I would not survive long in Belgium. Although I declined their offer, I was deeply moved by their affection and kindness. I wanted to give Colette a keepsake, but I had nothing to offer her except a Polish coin. She accepted it sadly, and we said a tearful goodbye.

I wanted to return to Grenoble and resume my studies. At this time, rail service was in a chaotic state. Many of the personnel had fled. There were no schedules, and no way of knowing if and when a train would run. The few trains that did run were overwhelmed by mobs of military personnel, and civilian refugees, all fleeing south. It was difficult to board a train unless someone got off. People were riding on the stairs, clinging to the door handles for dear life. I have no doubt some fell off and were killed in transit. The conductors could not collect any fares. At one point a train with French soldiers returning south from the war zone slowed down, and lifted me on board. I had to change trains several times, but somehow I managed to reach Grenoble.

Life in Grenoble was now deteriorating day by day. The Gestapo began to be active, although they kept a low profile. They left their dirty work to the French, who were organizing to deal with the Jews on their behalf. Little by little, the French police were checking identification papers, and asking questions about religion. The French government passed anti-Semitic laws. The French police were arresting refugees who had escaped from Nazi-occupied countries, and handing them over to the Gestapo, for deportation to death camps. We were on borrowed time. Sooner or later the Germans would occupy the rest of France. In order to survive the war, I would have to get out of France.

I wanted to go to England, although I knew they would pressure me to join the Polish army. But to get there, I would need special permission to cross Occupied France. You couldn't get into Spain either, because the Franco government was also cooperating with the Germans. I didn't know what to do.

A rumor circulated among my friends that there were boatmen in Marseilles who were smuggling refugees to Italy. Jews under Mussolini were still safe. It was said that the smugglers could be contacted in a certain whorehouse in Marseilles. I had no idea where to go or whom to see, but I was so desperate that I managed to get a ride on a train to Marseilles. It is a big city. I wandered around in the streets, and spoke randomly to passers-by. Finally I met a man who said that I could probably get the information I wanted in any whorehouse. He was on his way to a whorehouse, and offered to take me there.

I had never been in a whorehouse before. When I told my new friend that I didn't have much money, he offered to treat me. He said I would not have to do anything, except to ask questions. We entered a room where there were about a dozen attractive women, of various shapes and colors. There were blonds, brunettes, and red heads, all wearing see-through nightgowns, with nothing underneath.

I bought a drink at the bar. Girls were sitting down on the clients' laps, and opening up their pants. Before they could accost me, my new friend directed me to another room where they were showing very crude pornographic movies, obviously intended to arouse us sexually. I had never seen a porno movie before. A girl followed and tried to open my pants. The instant the movie was over, the Madame called out, "Mlles., Mlles., hurry up. The gentlemen are coming out of the movie now."

I sat down again and paid for another drink. A girl came and sat on my lap. She said "Come upstairs, and I will make you happy." I told her I was not interested. We started a conversation. In response to her questions, I told her I was Polish. She pointed to another man and said, "Oh, here's another Polak. I will introduce you." What an introduction, in a whorehouse!

The man happened to be a Pole, and not a Jew. We conversed, and I told him my purpose in being there. He said that I would be safer in Italy than in France, and that he knew a way for me to get there. When I asked him whether I could get to Spain, he discouraged me, saying it would be much more difficult. I would need connections, and a lot of money. He knew about a boat leaving that night for Corsica, and for a little money, the boatman would take me there. From Corsica it would not be difficult to get to Italy. That was the only way he knew. Somehow I didn't trust him, and his story didn't seem credible to me. So I went back to Grenoble. Had I succeeded in escaping to Italy, I would have ended up in a death camp.

I had a long talk with my roommate Grisha, who was from Kovno. We were both from a region now part of Lithuania, which had recently become part of the Soviet Union. Since Russia was at peace with Germany and France, we decided to ask the Russian Consul to repatriate us to our families. It seemed like a good idea.

Although the occasional letters we received from home were censored, they contained cryptic messages hinting that we should not come back. Some relatives from Russia whom my parents had not seen since the Revolution had visited them. They must have told them how hard life was in the Soviet Union. Neither my cousin Izyia, nor my father's brother was among the visitors. They had probably both been exterminated by Stalin.

Nevertheless, it was becoming too dangerous for us to remain in France. It seemed that repatriation to Russia might be the lesser of the two evils. We got permission to visit the Russian Consul in Vichy, and told him that we wanted to go home to our families. He said that would be fine with him, and that he would arrange safe transit for us through Germany.

Most people seeking help from the Russian Consulate were White Russians who had escaped to France in 1917. They had opposed the revolution, and supported the Czar. Now they wanted to get out of France, away from the Nazis. They were anti-Communist, and they were well past military age. Of course, the Russian Consulate wouldn't have anything to do with them.

Since we knew there would be a long wait before the Russian bureaucracy could process our request, we made the difficult trip back to Grenoble. Now the French police knew that we had permission to be repatriated. In their records, we were reclassified as Russians.

Circumstances were getting tougher and tougher. Full ration cards were issued. I couldn't believe that there was so little bread in France; the ration was one slice a day. Wine became very scarce. Potatoes did not exist. There was a substitute vegetable called topinambur, which had a texture like that of a potato. It grew wild and could be harvested quickly, but it did not taste very good. In my workers' restaurant I ate some meat, which they called rabbit. They asked me how I liked it, and I told them it was quite good. Then they told me it was cat meat. I was a bit sick after that.

The official ration was inadequate, and left us hungry. I found ways of stretching it. The owner of one bakery was very cordial. I would say to her, “bonjour madame,” and she would respond, “bonjour monsieur.” I would tell her I had a ration coupon for a slice of bread. When she gave me the bread, I would pretend to look for the coupon, and then say I had forgotten it, and would bring it tomorrow. She would say that was fine. Then I went to a cheese store. “I came by to tell you I have some news from Poland. Things are terrible there. Well, I will have a little piece of cheese.” “Do you have a coupon?” “No, I will bring it tomorrow.” Food was scarce, but we weren’t starving. We always had something to eat.

At this point, opportunities for entertainment were very limited. There were no movies from abroad, except German propaganda movies. The movie houses dug out the oldest movies, and I managed to see some of the wonderful old French classics. They were museum pieces, very exciting.

The dancing schools reopened, and I signed up for dancing lessons. Most of the students were girls. The schools were very happy to have a few fellows, particularly students, who were young and not in the military, to be partners for the girls. We didn’t have to pay.

The girls were comfortably middle-class. They had their mothers in attendance as chaperones. I met a lovely Catholic girl, Madeleine, and she fell head over heels in love with me. I really liked her a lot. She went to a school run by the Sisters. She was never allowed out alone, except to go shopping or to work. She worked in a Catholic library, where I would meet her occasionally. We used to neck behind the stacks of books. She sent me love letters, and had her maid bring me little gifts such as paperbacks. She asked me who I was. When I told her I was Russian, she said she wanted to marry me and go back to Russia with me. I tried to discourage her, saying that in Russia she would have to work. She could not just be a wife. I asked her what work she could do. She said, “I will learn office work, such as typing. I will learn to cook and do laundry. I can become a seamstress.”

She wanted very much to come to my room. I tried to dissuade her, but she contrived an excuse. She showed up one day, and said she had looked for me in the library but I wasn’t there. She was clearly a virgin, but it was also clear that she wanted to have sex with me. I was eager to have sex, and she was willing and prepared. But when I saw how agitated and excited she was, I just couldn’t bring myself to do it. I knew we had

no future together. At that point I said no.

Then she wept. She said “Now I know you really love me. You could have had me and you didn’t. This is the final proof. Now I know I want to marry you.” Soon after that, one of her love letters to me was intercepted by her family, and they took her out of dancing school. I never saw her again. This episode was a little vignette on my life in Grenoble, while I waited for the axe to fall.

Later, when I was in Switzerland, I wrote a short story about her. I sold it to a family magazine, which published it. The title was “Why did Madeleine cry?” I received at least a hundred letters from readers, asking what had happened to Madeleine, and what was the denouement of our love affair. This created a demand for me to publish additional stories.

Conditions in Vichy France were getting worse every day. Most of the Spanish Republicans had already been handed to the Germans, and deported to death camps. The same fate had befallen the Gypsies, and the refugees from Nazi terror. Now they were beginning to round up foreign Jews, and even some French Jews. They prepared a list of Russian nationals, in case it should be needed. As long as they could hand over Jews and foreigners, they hoped the French people might be safe from the Germans.

In June 1941, Germany attacked Russia. At this time, I had nearly completed my degree program at Grenoble. The next day, the Vichy government started to arrest all Russian nationals including White Russians who had escaped during the Communist Revolution a generation earlier. Since Kovno and Vilna were now in the USSR, Grisha and I were on their list. They came to arrest me about four or five in the morning.

6. The Argeles Concentration Camp

They told me to come to the police station, and take my papers. I was not to be alarmed. It was just a formality. I was not to bring anything else. Grisha stayed in bed. At the police station, they took away my papers. I managed to hide my Polish passport, and internal Polish identification card, but I had to give them my student visa, and other documents. They put me in a large holding cell, with many other people, and kept us there the rest of the day. It was very hot, and we had no food or water. We either had to stand, or to sit on the few wooden benches, or on the floor. Toilet facilities were minimal. In the evening, they caught up with Grisha, and brought him in.

That night we slept on the floor of the station house.

During the afternoon, a young woman had been brought in by a high-ranking officer, with whom she was flirting unashamedly. She was attractive in a sluttish sort of way. He gave her a kiss and a piece of chocolate, and left her there. In the middle of the night, the officer returned and awakened the young woman. He whispered something to her, and they left the room together. The next morning he brought her back. It was obvious that she had granted him sexual favors, in the hope of being released.

After we were arrested, one of my Christian friends went to our apartment, and retrieved some of my precious belongings. He saved my family picture album, and my matrum certificate, which he returned to me after the war. But he destroyed my grandfather's tallith, phylacteries and prayer book. It was too dangerous to keep them, with the French fascists rampaging through Grenoble.

The next day they put us into the hippodrome where the Spanish refugees had been. Most of them had already been deported to German concentration camps, and gassed. There were several thousand people there, mostly White Russians. Again, there was no food or water, and practically no toilets. Modesty became a luxury we could not afford. We relieved ourselves on the ground, in a remote corner of the arena. The bare stones of the stadium did not provide enough seats, so that most people had to sit on the ground.

Some of our friends threw food for us over the wall. They also threw writing materials, so that we could write to the authorities and protest the injustice of our arrest. "I am a student, and non-political. I am not a Communist." Our friends mailed the letters and petitions for us, but the documents did us no good. Our friends also threw a complete change of clean clothing over the wall for each of us. We preserved them carefully for the day when we might escape.

Eventually, the White Russians were released. After all, they were enemies of the regime in Russia, with whom Germany was at war. In the end Grisha and I and the young woman were the only ones left. Grisha and I were under suspicion as Communists, because we had asked to be repatriated, and besides we were of military age. We were put into a prison cell, and told we would be interned in a camp for Russian nationals.

At dawn the next day, Grisha and I were escorted to a regular passenger train by six gendarmes. Our feet were chained, and we were handcuffed together. In the train they reduced the number of gendarmes to two, and removed the chains and handcuffs. They said that as long as we behaved, they would not manacle us, but if we gave them any trouble, "We will put a chain around your neck, and tie you to the shelf above."

We were sitting in a compartment with civilian commuters, with gendarmes on each side of us. A few passengers asked who we were, and were told we were criminals being taken to the penitentiary. They were visibly disturbed, and moved away from us. At the last minute, the officer and the young woman, whom we had seen the previous day, boarded the train. He put her into our compartment, and told us she was going to a women's camp. He gave her another piece of chocolate, and kissed her goodbye. It was obvious that she had slept with him, and that he had made some promises, but now he was shipping her off to a concentration camp.

We had to go halfway across France to reach Argeles. It took nearly all day. At some point our guards stepped into the aisle to consult with the conductor. While they were distracted, the young woman told us there would be a stopover, and a change of trains. She urged us to make a run for it. I asked her, "How are we going to run for it, when we have two armed guards who accompany us even to the bathroom?" She said, "They are not going to shoot you." I decided that it was a clever ploy on her part, to convince me and Grisha to divert the guards, so that she could disappear in the other direction.

Argeles was a huge camp holding several thousand people. You couldn't see it all at once. It was bounded on three sides by a double layer of barbed wire fences, each layer surrounded by guards. The fourth side faced the ocean. The ocean side of Argeles was open, but there was no way to escape by sea. The barbed wire fences ran all the way to the shore, and 100 feet further out into the deep water. There was a guard with a machine gun patrolling the beach.

Between the two fences were the huts for the guards. Inside the fences, the camp was divided into smaller camps, like eggs, each fully enclosed by a double barbed wire fence, patrolled by guards. Each fence had a gate used as a check point. Some of the eggs were connected, so that you had to go through several eggs to get in or out of the camp.

Once we were inside, the French police guards confiscated whatever money and

documents they could find, including my Polish passport. I managed to conceal a little money and my Polish identity card in the lining of my coat. Later they proved to be invaluable assets. For some reason, they didn't ask Grisha for his passport. He was very proud of his passport, because it showed he was Lithuanian, and not Russian. So he handed it to them, to impress them. Now he had no papers at all. He also gave them all his money.

They brought us into one of those eggs. I suddenly felt my legs and body engulfed in fire. Swarms of fleas descended on me, and left my skin covered with fiery welts. I tried to brush off the fleas, but there were too many of them. They were to afflict us without respite for as long as we stayed in Argeles. One of the few survivors from the previous winter said to me, "You think this is bad? Wait until next winter. Compared to the lice we get in winter, the fleas are bearable."

It was August 1941 and it was very hot. For the first time in my life I saw people so emaciated that their bones protruded. They looked like the living skeletons in the German concentration camps at the end of the war. They were all sick, and so weak that they could barely move. They all had dysentery. They smelled from the bloody feces with which they were smeared. After a day or so, I smelled too.

We had no toilets. Our latrines were ditches dug into the ground. Even when we were some distance away, the stench was overpowering. You had to sit or squat over the ditch to relieve yourself. The runoff from the ditch polluted the well, which was our only source of drinking water. Everyone got dysentery. I began to have the runs as soon as I arrived. The ditch proved to be too far away. I didn't get there in time, and I soiled myself. There was no way to wash up.

Our housing consisted of large metal half-cylinders, made from pipes cut lengthwise, to be used as shelter from the elements. The half-cylinders resembled very primitive Quonset huts. Each enclosure was as long as a small room, and it was open on both ends. We had to crawl in, because there wasn't enough room to stand up inside. There was no straw, so that we had to sleep on the sandy ground.

There were about a hundred people in my unit. A few of the inmates looked better fed. It turned out that they were receiving letters and food packages from their friends and families outside. Some had managed to hide money, with which they bought food from the guards. The rest of us had to subsist on camp food. For breakfast, we got

something brown which they called coffee, served from a pail with a handle, which looked like a kerosene can. I had no cup to hold it, and so I hung around with a fellow who had a sardine can. After he finished the sardines and licked out the can, he gave it to me. I used it as a coffee cup, but after a while it rusted.

We had a small slice of bread, about 150 grams, as our daily ration. For lunch we got a warm liquid with a carrot or another vegetable floating in it. They called it soup. It was served in the same kind of pail. It was full of sand and fleas. Occasionally we would trade something to get a piece of fruit from someone's package. I lost thirty pounds in three weeks. I realized that I would soon be too weak to plan or carry out any escape from this hell.

There was another egg facing ours, which was a camp for orphaned Spanish children, and a few Spanish women employed to take care of them. The guards patrolled back and forth between the eggs. Across this space with the guards patrolling, I struck up a conversation with a young woman named Katya Alonzo. **PICTURE.** We flirted through the barbed wire fences. She was a refugee from Barcelona, who had fled across the border to France, at the end of the Spanish Civil War. She had a Russian father, and a Spanish mother. Since the war ended, she had lived in the camp, caring for a group of children. She did not think about escape, because there was no place for her to run. If she returned to Spain, the Fascists would shoot her. However, as a longtime camp inmate and employee, she could move around the camp rather freely, within her egg and from one egg to another. She was enterprising, and militantly antifascist.

Among those getting mail, money and food packages, were a young Russian consul named Malik, and his father. They would buy pajamas, watches, and other items from the inmates. They also bought several leather valises, in which they stored their possessions. I said to Malik, "You have some money. Maybe we can bribe a guard and run away." He said, "What about my old father?" I said, "We can help him swim. Maybe we can escape on the ocean side." He said, "What about my valises?" I told him he would have to leave them behind. He was very reluctant to lose his treasures.

I urged him to talk to the guard and bribe him. He wanted to do it at night, when it was dark. I said, "At night the guard is not going to talk to us. He will shoot first, and ask questions later. You have to talk to him during the day." He was afraid. I said, "Give me some money, and I will talk to him." He said he didn't trust me. We had reached

an impasse.

I was desperate to get out of Argeles. One night I said to him, "Alright, we will do it at night. Let's go together. You have the money. You can trust me. I will do it with you." So we went out to the gate, crawling on our bellies. The guard shouted, "Who is there?" He shot into the air. We crawled back, and that was the end of it.

Another week passed. I was very sick, and rapidly losing my strength. One day a group of Gestapo officers arrived in camp, ostensibly to enlist "volunteers" for work in Germany. They promised good food, better conditions, and some pay. At first, they did everything to make the operation seem credible, but of course Grisha and I were not fooled.

The officers were not in uniform, because they wanted to keep a low profile in Unoccupied France. They said they didn't want Jews, only Gentiles. They set up a highly organized registration procedure, using a barracks as an office. The registration commission consisted of German officers, some French officials, the Camp Commander, a secretary and some physicians. To complete the deception, the physicians would examine the volunteers, to certify that they were fit for work in Germany.

The living skeletons who populated the camp did not even bother to apply. They were half dead, anyway, and had lost the will to live. Some others who still had a modicum of strength were so desperate that they volunteered. They waited in a long line, extending far outside the barracks. Once in the barracks, the "work assignment" was explained to them, and they signed up. After this group had been completely registered, they were taken outside the camp, thrown into cattle cars, and taken away, in plain sight of the other inmates.

Now that the pretense was over, the commission began to take people who didn't volunteer. They were beaten, forced to line up and register, and then dragged to the cattle cars and thrown in. After that, they started taking Jews. The Jews tried to run and hide. Again, they were caught and beaten, forced to line up and register, and taken away. This went on for days. Argeles was being slowly emptied out.

I talked to one of the Spanish physicians, but there was nothing he could do. I spoke to Katya. She said that the Spanish personnel were safe because they worked there. She

would see what she could do. Finally, Grisha and I were dragged over and put in line. People ahead of us were moving up, and going into the barracks to face the commission. We stayed in line, but constantly moved to the end of it. Toward the end of the week, we had to walk into the barracks where the officers sat. Finally, on Saturday, we were the only ones left in line.

I started screaming to the French official at the desk, that they had no right to force me to sign up. "Where is your French honor? I came to France to study." I yelled, I cried and shouted. I made a big speech. They looked at me as if I were insane. It was six or seven in the evening, and they were tired. The French officials were embarrassed. One of them grabbed me by my neck and dragged me to the door. He gave me a big kick in the behind, which propelled me four or five feet outside the barracks. Then he threw Grisha out too. We were not taken that day.

Katya talked to me through the barbed wire. She said, "I think I can do something. Tomorrow is Sunday, and I am going to visit you. Put on your good clothes and get shaved and cleaned up. I will explain it to you." I said to Grisha, "We are getting out tomorrow." He said, "No, I cannot leave without my passport." Can you imagine! He nearly stayed. I had to argue with him to come with me.

The following day was Sunday, and the commission took the day off. At the last minute, Grisha decided to go with me. We put on our best clothes, which we had carefully saved for just such an escape attempt. Sixty or seventy people in the camp, stood around and gaped as we shaved and washed. Some asked us, "Where the hell do you think you are going?" Katya came in, bearing a forged document on a stolen form. It ordered me and Grisha to report for interrogation to an office just outside the camp. She told us to fill in our names.

The whole scheme was incredible. The interrogation office was closed on Sunday. Besides, we had no escort but Katya. But the French are not the Germans. Security was lax. Most of the inmates had been deported, and the remaining ones were half dead anyway. Since it was Sunday, there was a reduced guard force patrolling the camp. They hardly expected anyone to escape.

We had to pass through five or six check points. Katya went with us. The guards all knew her. At each gate, she flirted with them, playfully teasing them, and leading them on. They chased her around, stole kisses, and fondled her. When we showed them our

papers, and told them we were going for interrogation, they waved us through. So, on a beautiful sunny day we walked out of Argeles.

Many years later, while on a summer tour of the French countryside, I visited the town of Argeles. It had become a fashionable resort. I looked very hard for signs of the concentration camp, but they had been entirely obliterated.

Outside the camp, we walked past people leading normal lives. They were sitting on their patios, and enjoying their Sunday rest, relaxing and drinking wine, all within 200 meters of the hell that was Argeles. We walked along the country road with Katya in the middle, singing songs and pretending we were coming back from the beach. When we entered the small village of Argeles, it was teeming with gendarmes, functionaries, and guards from the concentration camp, all relaxing on their day off.

I had lost some money in a card game a few days before. Now we had just enough to buy two tickets to the town of Perpignon, which was the next station. We said goodbye to Katya and boarded the train. She returned to camp.

I have traveled to France many times. I like Paris, and the French language, and culture. But the infamous behavior of France during World War II was a crime against humanity. They have paid very little for what they did to the Jews. I cannot visit France today without bitterness.

Today, I also know a lot more about the behavior of other governments. I know about America's refusal to admit refugees from the Holocaust, or to bomb the concentration camps. And what about England, which could have saved so many lives by granting visas, but chose instead to let them perish? What about England, which shipped Jewish refugees to Australia during the war, and treated them as German spies? The list is endless. There is no conscience in the world. With rare exceptions, the politicians only care only about power and money. There is only one conclusion. To Roosevelt and Churchill, to the peoples of the world, the Jews were expendable.

Later, when Grisha and I were in Switzerland, we corresponded with Katya. After the war, she was released from Argeles, along with the few surviving orphan children. She returned to Spain, where she was warned by the Fascist government to keep her mouth shut. Instead, Katya spoke out openly against the regime, and joined an underground group to oppose it. She was arrested, and sent to prison. She managed to

send us a picture of the prison, and to indicate the window of her cell.

After serving her sentence, Katya was released. She began to visit various Spanish ports where ships were leaving for Israel, hoping to get news of us. At one of these ports, she arranged to meet Grisha, who was debarking for Israel. Grisha and some friends smuggled Katya on board.

She went to Israel, and lived there many years. She married an Israeli, and had two daughters there. But she was too restless to lead an ordinary life, and eventually she was divorced. She always had to have a cause. This time, she decided to work in a leper colony. She wrote to me in America, and invited me to join her. I declined, since I did not share her idealism. That was the last time I heard from her.

7. Hiding in Vichy France

We got off the train in Perpignon, about two o'clock in the afternoon. Someone had given us the address of a Jewish family there. We hoped that they would give us money for train tickets to Grenoble, where we had friends who could help us. Although we were relatively clean-shaven and well dressed, we were surrounded by clouds of fleas.

The family gave us some food, and listened to our story. They were nice, but also very scared. Our presence was dangerous for them. They did not have much money, and were reluctant to give us any. I offered them my old Omega watch, but they didn't want it. I made it clear that we would not leave without the money. I knew they wouldn't call the police.

Finally, it was getting dark. The last train was about to leave. They were afraid that we were going to stay there for the night. Clouds of fleas were jumping off us, looking for fresh bodies. The family had no choice. They took us to the station, and bought us two tickets to Grenoble.

The long trip to Grenoble without identity papers was terrifying. We had to change trains many times. At every station, we had to circumvent document controls. Sometimes, we hid in the bathroom. Sometimes we got off the train while papers were being checked, and jumped on again after the train started. At last, we managed to reach Grenoble.

In Grenoble, we found some friends who put us up in an attic. We rested for a few days. I had lost thirty pounds in three weeks, and I looked emaciated. **PICTURE** We consulted with our friends about what to do next. The general consensus was that we should join the Maquis, the French Underground. This turned out to be an idiotic idea. Since the Maquis did not advertise their address, nobody knew where to find them. Everybody thought they should be in the mountains.

So we packed a few things in a rucksack, and went into the mountains near Grenoble. Can you imagine two young fellows, weak and emaciated, speaking French with a foreign accent, visiting all the little mountain villages, and asking how to join the Maquis! We were very suspicious characters. Nobody knew where to find the Maquis, and if they did, they were not telling us. We slept in the open every night, and ended up catching colds. After ten days we went back to the attic.

The French police had already been there, looking for us. We learned that Argeles had been emptied out, and everyone except the Spanish refugees deported and exterminated. Before long the word got around that two Jewish students had escaped from Argeles, and were hiding in Grenoble. There were many touching acts of kindness. People brought us food. Every morning two nuns, who had taken a vow of silence, would bring us a quart of milk and leave without saying a word. Our friends approached some sympathetic students and professors, whom they regarded as trustworthy and anti-fascist. Together they raised a little money for us.

8. Escape to Switzerland.

Again we consulted our friends about what to do next. This time, the consensus was that we should cross the Alps to Switzerland. They located two trustworthy mountain guides in Chamonix, who would guide us to the Swiss border for a fee. We would all pretend that it was just an innocent hike in the mountains. If we chose not to come back to France with them, they would not force us.

Our friends collected a few Swiss coins for us. One morning, we packed our things into two rucksacks, and boarded a train to Chamonix. Once again we hid in the bathroom, and jumped off and on the train at every station, to avoid document checks. We arrived about four or five o'clock in the afternoon, and found the two guides waiting for us.

They explained that we had to reach a lean-to in the foothills of Mount Blanc before

dark. Then we would climb the glacier, which was very near the Swiss border. This border location was not guarded, because there was no road, and access was extremely difficult.

Because of our weakened condition, and the weight of our rucksacks, we could not keep up with them. They took Grisha's rucksack, which weighed twenty-five or thirty pounds, and went on ahead. I lagged about half a kilometer behind them, and Grisha lagged another half a kilometer behind me. The climb became steeper and steeper, and it soon got dark. We thought we would never make it, but somehow we did. We arrived at eleven o'clock that night. The guides had been there for several hours. It was pitch black, but we were guided by the light in the lean-to.

We had a sandwich and a drink. Without taking off our clothes or our shoes, we lay down and passed out. About three o'clock in the morning the guides woke us up. We were going to climb the glacier with them in pitch darkness, while the snow and ice were hard. They gave us Alpine climbing poles. They put a rope around us and tied us to them, so that we would not fall into a ravine, and with lanterns to light the way we began to climb the glacier. We were at the foot of Mont Blanc, with an incredibly beautiful view before us.

Step by step and hour by hour we climbed. Early that afternoon we reached the summit. The Swiss border was directly ahead. They said that we would probably get lost, and if we did, we should follow the streams of melting ice down the mountain into Switzerland. They gave us some bread and cheese, and we paid them the normal fee for an excursion.

The Swiss village at the foot of the mountain was at the beginning of the rail line to Lausanne. They urged us to arrive there by seven or eight in the evening, before the last train left. We couldn't stay there overnight because if we were caught on the border, we would be arrested, and pushed back to France.

After the guides left us, we proceeded across the border, and down the glacier, stopping from time to time to drink cold water from the mountain streams. Starved, frozen and exhausted, we could hardly walk. We had been warned not to drink too much water, and to go easy on the brandy in Grisha's flask. Grisha did not heed their advice. He began to slow down out of exhaustion. He was bloated with water, and brandy. I was angry at him, and threatened to leave him behind. We got lost several times. When we got to the little Swiss whistle stop, we saw the border guards relaxing in the cafés. We pretended

to be tourists, and we walked to the railroad station singing French songs. To our dismay the last train had left.

We went back into the mountains to hide until daybreak. It was September, and it was getting cold. Our feet were so swollen that we could not take off our shoes. We had a bottle of rum and instead of sipping it, we drank it down. It knocked us out, but it warmed us, and we spent the night on the mountain.

In the morning we went back to the train station. At the ticket counter, we emptied our pockets of the Swiss coins we had collected from our friends. We asked for two tickets to Lausanne. The woman behind the counter clearly understood who we were. She took some of the change without counting it, gave us two tickets, and pushed the rest of the change back to us. She told us to sit in the back out of sight, and wait for her to call us in an hour, when the train came. A few minutes later, she came to the back, with two dozen beautiful apricots in her apron. She shook them out into our laps. We sat there and ate them, and felt like crying. An hour later she came back and put us on the train to Lausanne.

Part III: The Shame of Switzerland

1. From Lausanne to Zurich

In Hollywood movies, you sometimes see fugitives from Nazi-dominated Europe scaling the Alps into neutral Switzerland. As they cross the border to freedom, the music swells to a joyous crescendo. So it was with the Trapp Family in “The Sound of Music,” and with French partisans or downed Allied pilots in various other films.

But Jewish refugees who fled to Switzerland did not find safe haven there. Countless thousands were deported to the border, and handed over to the Nazi guards to be slaughtered. For them, this image of a Swiss sanctuary is a monstrous lie. Grisha and I were there! They branded us as illegal refugees. They pursued, persecuted and jailed us as criminals. We survived only by a series of miracles. Again, so much for historical accuracy in Hollywood! There is, however, a German film, “The Boat is Full,” which gives an authentic account of the brutal treatment of Jewish refugees in Switzerland. It is the shame of Switzerland.

In Lausanne, we had the address of a wealthy refugee who was the intermediary in our correspondence with our parents. Since there was no longer any direct mail service between Poland and France, he would forward our letters between us and our parents. Our parents also sent him some Polish money, with which he helped other refugees in Switzerland. In return, he would send us a few Swiss francs in France.

When he saw us at the door of his apartment, he turned white with terror. If the Swiss police should find us there, he would lose his permit to stay in Switzerland. Such a loss would be tantamount to a death sentence for him. So he told us that we couldn’t even spend the night there.

However, he agreed to take us to a young Swiss rabbi who lived in Vevey, a few railroad stops from Lausanne. The rabbi had recently been married. He and his wife welcomed us warmly, and seemed deeply moved and troubled by our story. They gave us plenty of food, and some cigarettes. We were happy to have a bath, and a change of underwear. They put us up in a store room in their house for several days. To avoid detection, we had to remain hidden behind large bags of sugar. We created small spaces between the bags, to provide enough air for us to breathe.

Our new friends decided that it was important for us to obtain passports from the Polish

Consulate in Lausanne. In those days, consular positions were strictly honorary, and paid no salary. Many of the Polish officials had fled when the Germans invaded Poland, fearful that Switzerland would be invaded next. They were replaced by wealthy Polish Jews who lived in Switzerland. Thus, for the first time in history, the Polish Consulate was sympathetic to Jews.

The consular officials were willing to do whatever they could to help me. They issued a valid passport, based on my internal Polish identification paper, which I had hidden in the lining of my coat. However they could do nothing for Grisha, because he was a Lithuanian, and besides he had no papers at all. They said that in a tight situation, I might be able to vouch for him.

Then our friends advised us to go to Zurich, where there was a bigger Jewish community, and a refugee organization which could help us. They took us to the station, and bought us two rail tickets to Zurich. A few weeks later the young rabbi fell off a train and was killed. It was recorded as a suicide. Apparently he was deeply depressed by the fate of the Jews of Europe.

Our train to Zurich was due in half an hour. Grisha and I were sitting in the waiting room when two policemen came in and began to check everyone's papers. We could not easily leave without attracting attention. There were about twenty people in the room to be checked, so that we had only a little time to decide what to do. We left our rucksacks on the bench, and headed for the bathroom downstairs. When we passed the policemen, they looked at us, and then glanced at our luggage. They didn't stop us. We walked past them carefully, and down the stairs. I told Grisha we should wait in the restroom until the train was about to leave, and then jump on without taking our luggage. However, at the last minute, we just couldn't bring ourselves to leave behind all our worldly possessions. When the train started, we returned to the waiting room. Fortunately, the policemen were gone. We grabbed our rucksacks and jumped on the moving train.

In Zurich, we headed for the Office for the Help of Refugees, or the Zurcher Flüchtlingshilfe, an agency of the Zurich Jewish community. It occupied a large building on Lavaterstrasse. We spoke to several people in the building, and soon the word spread that there were two refugees who had escaped from a French concentration camp. Many refugees worked there, nearly all of them from Germany or Austria. We were practically the first refugees from France.

The refugees showed great concern for us. They immediately brought us something to eat. They advised us not to see the president of the *Flichtingshilfe* immediately. He was a very wealthy Swiss Jew, whose position was honorary. He was committed to obeying Swiss laws, and to avoiding embarrassment for himself and the Agency. Since we were illegal immigrants, he would probably not help us much. As a Swiss Jew, he would be afraid to even know of our existence. It would be safer for us to first see the Public Relations official, who was a lawyer. He was a nice man, and very sympathetic to our plight. After an hour's conversation, he took us to the president's office, and introduced us. Then he left us there.

The president was a man in his late fifties or early sixties. He was well dressed, with an elegant diamond ring on his pinky. He sported a beard and mustache. He was very formal, and very cold. He listened to our story about Argeles, and how the camp had been liquidated. When we finished, he said bluntly that there was nothing he could do for us. Switzerland did not accept refugees from any part of France, especially the unoccupied part. We would not be in any danger if we returned to France. Our story about the deportation of inmates from Argeles to death camps could not be proven.

He gave us each twenty francs, and advised us to return to France the way we had come. We would then have a chance to disappear into France. On the other hand, if the police ever found us in Zurich, they would take us to the border, and hand us over to the guards.

We refused to leave. We said that we would stay in his office until he helped us. If he wanted to call the police, he could do so. We knew that he would never do that. He said, "You can't stay here. I am going to lunch. I have to lock my office." He pushed us out into the corridor, and locked the door. He went to lunch accompanied by his secretary, who was a very fancy lady.

At first we remained standing in the corridor. However, we were so exhausted that eventually we sat down on the floor. Several people questioned us, and soon fifty or sixty people knew that there were two refugees from France who had been refused help by the president of the *Flichtlingshilfe*. It began to smell like a scandal. There was a great deal of outrage among the refugees. They took us to lunch, and brought us back to the PR man, who returned to the president's office with us. We were not just going to disappear without a trace.

Word must have reached the president, and his secretary during their lunch. When they

returned, he was visibly agitated and embarrassed. He didn't want us to stay in the hall, where we were conspicuous, and so he invited us back into his office. He explained that officially he could do very little to help us, because we were there illegally, and he couldn't risk breaking the law. However, he would consult with other Agency officials about what to do with us. First they would have to find a place for us to stay. He advised us to go to the cafeteria, and wait there.

During the afternoon, a refugee volunteered to put us up for the night. That was very typical. Refugees were always willing to help, even though they risked their lives in doing so. They knew that if they were caught, they would be deported to Germany. On the other hand, the Swiss Jews were terrified to get involved. In the German part of Switzerland, there was much sympathy for the Nazis. The Swiss Jews felt very insecure. Although they contributed money for refugees, and were compassionate in other ways, they were reluctant to break the law by helping an illegal refugee.

The next morning we returned to the president's office. By then several hundred people, everyone in the building knew about us. It had the earmarks of a major scandal. The president told us that in order to apply for political asylum, we would have to register with the police as refugees. However, the Zurcher Cantons Politzei, the State Police in Zurich were very anti-Semitic, and very hostile to refugees. Therefore we would be better off in Bern. He advised us to tell the police in Bern that we had just arrived across the border, and to ask for asylum there.

We were expecting such an answer from him. Thus far, wherever we had sought help, we had been passed along to another community. So we said we would not go by ourselves. We wanted a lawyer from the Agency to accompany us. Otherwise, in all probability, we would disappear without a trace. The president said that if he sent a lawyer, he would be admitting complicity. We told him we would not leave without a lawyer, and that he was free to call the police. We had reached an impasse.

2. From Zurich to Bern

Eventually, the PR man, who was a lawyer, said that he would go with us to Bern, if we would travel in a different compartment, and pretend not to know him until we arrived. Then we could say we had met on the train. Thus if we were arrested en route, he would not be implicated.

In Bern, we went to the police station with the PR man. He said he had met us in Bern,

and had agreed to represent us as our lawyer. We told the police our story, emphasizing that we had come to them voluntarily to ask for asylum in Switzerland. We registered as political refugees, and were told that our fate would be decided soon. In the meantime we were supposed to report to the police every morning, to show good faith. They gave us lodgings in an inn, which was comfortable, clean and simple. They gave us clothing, and some money, and we were fed at the inn. To us the food looked like Cordon Bleu cuisine. It was actually quite plain, but decent.

We knew that the police response would have been very different if we had come to them without an advocate. They would have put us into a cell, and returned us to the border the next morning. Nobody would have known about it. The Swiss police returned many refugees to the border guards. Let it be on the record that many refugees were pushed over the border into the hands of German and Austrian guards, and some of them were killed right there, in sight of the Swiss police. Yet, in the official Swiss records, you will find nothing about it.

We walked around the beautiful streets of Bern. In one of the gardens, we met two girls. We told them we were Swiss from Lausanne, and we started to meet them in the park for dates. In some ways our lives took on a semblance of normality. We began to breathe more freely, and to entertain the hope that now at last we would be safe.

We were befriended by a Quaker lady, Mme. Kurz. Her husband was principal of a gymnasium, which was a prestigious post in Switzerland, nearly like a university professor, and maybe just as important. This is true in German speaking countries. You cannot approach such a personage directly, but only through his secretary. Both he and his wife had important social and political connections in the community. Mme. Kurz was friendly with the Chief of Police, and she believed there was a good chance that we would be granted permission to stay in Switzerland.

There was a great deal of sympathy for refugees in some non-Jewish communities, and especially in the churches. The Quakers, along with some other church groups, were actively helping refugees in Switzerland. However, for several reasons, the police and the government were hostile to refugees. First of all, they were afraid of the Germans. Secondly, many of them hated Jews as much as the Nazis did. They also did not want to strain their resources by caring for hordes of refugees. Their harsh treatment of refugees was kept somewhat in check by public opinion, but their worst excesses were hidden from public view.

It was Yom Kippur 1941, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. In the past, I had always fasted for twenty-four hours on Yom Kippur. Even secular or assimilated Jews, and even those who have abandoned Judaism, are welcome to join the Jewish community in fasting and attending services on Yom Kippur. It is a link to our ancient Jewish heritage. However, on this Yom Kippur, Grisha and I decided not to fast. Since our future was so uncertain, this might be one of the last days when we could eat normally. We knew that if we were sent back to the border, we would never know where we would get our next meal. It was the first time in my life that I did not fast on Yom Kippur. I was nearly 21 years old. I have never fasted since. Years later, I learned that my father was executed on that day by the Lithuanian and German murderers in Vilna.

On Yom Kippur, Mme. Kurz invited us to her gracious home for dinner. We didn't realize what an honor it was. We were warmly welcomed, and encouraged to relax and talk about ourselves. At the end of the meal, she took us both into another room and said,

"I waited until the end of the meal to tell you that I have very bad news for you. Today I had lunch with the Chief of Police. He told me that for a while, they had favored your application for asylum. However, this morning, forty refugees, men, women and children, crossed the border from France into Geneva. If you were allowed to stay, they would have to stay also. The law must be applied equally to all of you. We can't change our policy just for you. You will be sent back tomorrow, or the day after."

She continued, "The Police Chief said that Jews in Unoccupied France are not in danger. He contacted the French authorities, who denied your story about Argeles. They said that nobody had ever bothered you in Unoccupied France, and that you would be perfectly safe there. The Police Chief told me this in confidence. I must ask you to keep it confidential, because I can do a great deal for refugees if I have the trust of the police. Otherwise, I will lose my connection. But I thought I should warn you. I wanted to give you a good meal before you go, and some money to make your first days in France easier." With tears in her eyes, she handed each of us a hundred francs. We felt that this dear lady was well aware of the fate that would await us in France, but she could do nothing more to help us.

3. From Bern to Zurich

Our world had collapsed. We were being thrown back, first to France, then to Argeles, and eventually to Germany and death. I said to Grisha, "We have nothing to lose. If we return to the inn, they will arrest us, and then we are as good as dead. We each have a hundred francs. Let's forget about our possessions. Let's go to the station immediately,

and take a train to Zurich.” It was too late that night, so we walked around in the streets. We spent the night hiding in various places, and then sat in the waiting room at the station. We never returned to the inn. The next day, we went to Zurich.

When we arrived there, we had no place to go. We knew it wasn’t safe to go back to the *Flichtlingshilfe*. We later found out that our fears were well-founded. In those days Zurich was a relatively small city. Every street had a detective in residence. He knew the residents by sight, and could recognize any strangers. Although there were no computers, every Swiss in the city was registered in a central file. The Zurich police thought that they were the best police in the world. Maybe they were.

Every night we would climb a hill called *Ütliberg* at the center of Zurich, and spend the night there. It was very cold. During the day, we would walk the streets. We were aware that when you are hiding, you have to keep a low profile. You don’t loiter in front of a window, or stare at anyone, or cross the street the wrong way. At first, we had no way to shave or wash up, but after several days we bought some shaving supplies, so that we would not attract attention. Then our money started running out.

We decided to talk to people coming out of a synagogue after Friday night services. Since it was the Sabbath, most of them didn’t carry any money. Some of them told us to come to their places of business on Sunday or Monday. Some had money which they gave us. But none of them offered us a place to stay, where we could wash up and get a good night’s sleep. It became clear again that the Swiss Jews were too terrified to help much.

After several weeks, we were so desperate that we went back to the *Flichtlingshilfe* and spoke to the refugees there. They said that the police had already been there looking for us. The official police story was that they had been about to grant us asylum, when for some inexplicable reason, we had run away. Now the police were conducting a systematic search for us. We couldn’t tell anyone about Mme. Kurz, and her confidential meeting with the Police Chief in Bern, nor of her warning that we were to be deported.

The refugees began to organize help for us. They found a German family, an elderly couple from Frankfort, who were in their late fifties. They had lost everything on *Kristallnacht*, when their photography store had been destroyed. They had fled to Switzerland with their son, a late only child of about 10. They were very scared sweet people, but they took us in and shared their meager vegetarian meals with us. They hid us for several weeks.

The woman was so terrified that she would wander around the apartment at night with a flashlight, looking through the doors and windows, afraid of a police raid. They knew if we were caught, they would be immediately deported to Germany. But they took the chance and kept us there. We gave them whatever money we had, and the other refugees collected money for our support.

After a while, somebody suggested that I go to the Polish Consulate with my passport, and seek help. As in Lausanne, many of the Polish consular officials in Zurich were affluent Jews. When I told my story, they were very sympathetic. They said, "We want to help you, but we can't. We are a legal institution. You are here illegally, and the police are looking for you. But we have an idea. Suppose you had just arrived, and you told us that you are a Pole passing through Switzerland en route to some other country, and that you need a little money. We would give you two hundred francs. However, we can't do it for your friend. Suppose you came back a month later, and said you are a Pole passing through, and so forth. We could give you another two hundred francs. As far as we are concerned, any time you come is the first time we have seen you. If you come here every month, we will give you two hundred francs each time." This was an enormous help. For the first time, we had a reliable source of income.

4. Hiding in Zurich.

With this in mind, our refugee friends found a small room for us in a house owned by a Gentile family, on a quiet side street. The family understood that we were in hiding. The room was under the staircase leading into the building. They were willing to rent it to us for two hundred francs a month, without asking questions. Now two hundred francs was a very steep price. You could get a meal in a good restaurant for about a franc. But they were running risks. I don't know whether they took us in out of sympathy, or for the money, but it doesn't really matter. It was more than any of the Swiss Jews were willing to do.

The room had two beds, one chair, and a small table. It was heated by a wood-burning iron stove, equipped with a stovepipe which vented the smoke outdoors. There was no ice box or refrigerator, no bathroom and no running water. A small high window looked out toward the yard. Through it I could see a rooftop and a patch of sky. Occasionally I would also see a bird.

The landlord supplied wood for the stove. When we first moved in, he fed us. Later, the refugees brought our meals. They worked it out so that officially the president and

officials of the *Flichtlingshilfe* knew nothing about us. But unofficially, a refugee was allowed to collect meals for us from the cafeteria every day. We ate regularly, usually one hot and one cold meal a day. The refugees also collected money and cigarettes for us. Everyone contributed one or two cigarettes, so that we were well supplied with every brand of cigarette. Both of us smoked heavily in those days.

One of the refugees, a German Jew named Lasser, used to come twice a day with supplies, newspapers and containers of food. He brought us bed linen, underwear and other clothing, and toilet articles which had been donated. It was clear that he was keeping some of the money and supplies for himself, but we knew that he was taking risks for us, and that his Agency salary was small. He asked us to write letters of thanks to dozens of people, for things which we never received. He did not have to account to anyone. We didn't know who gave us what anyway. However, he was quite devoted to us. He even brought a barber to give us haircuts, and shaves, and he took our laundry out regularly to be washed.

Many years later, I looked him up during a visit to Switzerland. He asked me for some money. I didn't have much, but I gave it to him. He seemed disappointed, as though I should have given him much more. To this day, I feel guilty about it.

We were not supposed to go out. The landlord was afraid that another tenant might see us and betray us to the police. Therefore, we had to adjust to voluntary confinement. There was a woman named Ella who brought us a flower every day. It was very touching. She held a high secretarial position in the Agency. After a while, I asked her for some books. She brought me books by Freud, Jung, and Adler, as well as books on philosophy, religion and anthropology. I read many German classics, and French classics in German translation. Reading was a great consolation to me. I also began to write short stories and poetry in Yiddish.

I had studied German in the Hebrew gymnasium three times a week for eight years. However, when I came to Switzerland I didn't speak German very well. While I was in hiding, I read many books in German, so that my German became quite fluent. This proved to be an enormous advantage throughout my stay in Switzerland. It was an unexpected bonus from my confinement. As the saying goes, it is an ill wind that blows no good.

Ella and her husband Vym were Swiss Jews, members of a group called the Oxford Group,

which had a religious tone. They were all vegetarians. Every morning, the members would contemplate the wrongs they have done the previous day. They had to set them right before sundown. They would also meditate every day. The group would meet regularly to discuss problems of ethics and conscience, and to tell stories of how they had righted their wrongs. Ella brought me books about their philosophy.

Grisha used to call me the “Graisser Philosoph” because I would talk to him about arcane and difficult subjects. He was neither a student nor a philosopher. He never read a book. For him confinement was unbearable. Since he had nothing to do, he was literally going out of his mind. He was young. He wanted to dance. He wanted a woman. At some point our relationship got so bad that there were periods when we didn’t even talk to each other.

Our living arrangements posed many problems. We had no bathroom, and the landlord would only let us use his bathroom once a day. He occupied an apartment on the ground floor. We had to find the right moment when nobody would see us, and knock on his door. At other times, we would urinate into a bottle, which we later emptied into his toilet. Little by little, we learned to recognize the sound of each neighbor’s footsteps. We knew which floor each neighbor occupied. We could recognize the footsteps of a stranger. It became a way of life.

There was no running water in the room. We would fill a bowl with water for washing, and fill another container with drinking water. We learned to clean our dishes by first wiping them with newspapers to remove the fat, before rinsing them in the wash water.

Since we were not supposed to make any noise, we could not have a radio. With all visual and audio input cut off, I became more and more introspective. I began to study the Jewish and Hindu religions, and to meditate deeply. Sometimes I would see a bird through the window, or hear one nearby. I do not know whether it was true or not, but at some point I believed that I could project myself into the bird. When the bird flew off, I would see Zurich through its eyes. I began to have some very unusual psychic experiences.

While I was still in France, I had corresponded with Lippa’s sister Masha in America. The British had already reneged on their promise to issue visas for Lippa and Tamara to enter Palestine. Masha was frantically trying to save their lives by bringing them to the USA. Every year she would file affidavits and other documents such as income tax returns, to sponsor them. However, they had to wait their turn under the Russian quota.

They ran out of time. They were slaughtered at Ponary before their visas came.

During my year in hiding, I went to the American Consulate in Zurich to apply for a visa. I had to apply under the Polish quota, because Vilna was in Poland when I was born. (The rest of my family was classified as Russian.) They assigned a quota number to me. Shortly thereafter, the USA stopped issuing all visas, but my quota number remained in effect.

Then I wrote to Masha and told her I had applied for a visa, even though I was in Switzerland illegally. Masha began sending documents to the American Consulate in Zurich every year to support my application. She was very devoted in that way. It took seven years for me to get my visa.

Time passed. It is hard to describe how it feels to live in hiding for a year. Of course it wasn't a prison. There were interruptions, and there were many kind people who helped us. Once a month I had to risk going out to the Polish Consulate for money. At some point, all the refugees in Zurich knew that two young men had been hiding for nearly a year, while the police searched everywhere for them.

Ella came every day, and brought books and a flower. Eventually she took us home with her to meet her husband. It was a welcome break from our oppressive routine. They were a strange couple, but they got along well with each other. Her husband was a dental technician. He was very nice, but reserved and taciturn, like a typical Swiss. Once they invited us to a meeting of their Oxford Group. Grisha declined to go. They introduced me as Salik, a friend from another part of Switzerland. The group was very friendly and didn't ask too many questions.

Lasser used to invite us to his rented room, where he served us some food. He lived with his Swiss girl friend. One of his specialties was to mash sardines with onions, spread them on bread and butter and make a sandwich. He was a vulgar man, and made tasteless jokes about our sexual needs. He noticed some stains on our underwear and linens, when he took them to be washed. He insinuated that we were masturbating, which we were. He hinted that we might be homosexuals. Obviously he thought his smutty remarks were very funny.

One evening, on the way home from his house, he took me for a walk through the narrow winding streets of old Zurich. I was very nervous, but he said, "It is dark. Nobody will

see you.” It was a foggy evening. We could barely see two steps in front of us. There were lights in the fog. It was one of those nights when you feel bemused, when everything looks mysterious, and you are not quite sure what is happening.

On the way, he stopped at a doorway, and said, “I have an errand to do upstairs. You stay here and don’t move. I will be right down.” I waited for what seemed to be a long time. Suddenly a man came down the street toward me. He saw me in the doorway, went a few feet past me, then turned around and looked at me again. He acted as if he was coming back. I thought he was a detective, and that I was going to be caught.

So I began to walk in the opposite direction. After only five or six steps, I became lost in the fog. The man didn’t follow me. I returned, but I couldn’t recognize the doorway where I was supposed to wait. I tried several doorways, waiting five or ten minutes at each one. Then, I thought I might find my way home by myself. It was quite late, and there were very few people out, and very little traffic. I wandered around, and went through an underpass. It was a nightmarish feeling, with a light shining here, and a person walking there, like a shadow in the dark. There was fog, voices, and the sound of cars.

Suddenly I saw water. I found out later it was the Limat River. Then a big neon sign flashed in front of me, “Zurcher Cantons Polizei,” or Zurich State Police. For a moment I was hypnotized, like a rabbit in the glare of a headlight. I couldn’t move. My worst fear was about to be realized. Then I started running wildly through the dark streets, totally disoriented, and bumping into things. I thought I would never find my way home again. I thought I was being pursued. Suddenly, I felt a hand on my shoulder, and somebody grabbed me. I screamed in terror. It was Lasser. Several years later, I wrote a short story about it, just a vignette, to describe my feelings. I sold it to a family magazine, which published it. The public response was overwhelming.

Our landlord wouldn’t let us take a bath. We began to go to the Hallenbad or public bath house. It had a glass roof, and we could swim there, and take a shower. I went there once a month, and Grisha went weekly. He met a Swiss girl there, and began to date her. He told her that he was a Swiss from Lausanne. She couldn’t tell that he spoke French with an accent. He slept with her once or twice, and told me about it. Where they did it, I don’t know. I was furious with him for taking such a risk, but he told me not to worry. If he got caught, it was his life anyway. He had no papers to betray his identity, and he would never reveal my hideaway. He said I was safe. I was distressed about it, but I couldn’t control him.

Into my life came Sonia Weinberg PICTURE, the sister of Ella. She began to visit me regularly, and we soon fell in love. Sonia was a kind, decent person, one of the most loving women I have ever known. While Grisha was in the room, we had no privacy. We would only engage in heavy petting. When Grisha began to go out on dates, we were finally able to have sex. What that meant to me I cannot find words to describe. So I couldn't stop Grisha from going out on dates.

Sonia was employed by a wealthy Jewish business man as his personal secretary, and was well treated and well paid. He also gave her some money for relief work. She was actively helping Jews in camps or in hiding, by sending them food packages and money. She and her boss led normal lives, because Jews were not persecuted in Switzerland, as they were in Germany. Her father was a Jew, and her mother was German.

Sonia was no stranger to tragedy. As a child, she had been seduced by an older man. Later, before she met me, she had fallen in love with a Jewish refugee from Lithuania, who was in Switzerland for a short time. He was deported to France by the Swiss. She sent him money regularly for his support. Once she went to visit him, and became pregnant. It later turned out that he was living with another woman, and supporting her on Sonia's money. In her fifth month of pregnancy, Sonia had a very messy abortion, as a result of which she was unable to bear children.

Her boy friend was eventually taken to Drancy, a center for deportation to German concentration camps. She moved heaven and earth to get him a Swiss visa. When she finally got it, she traveled to Drancy with it. She was one day too late. He had already been deported, and was never heard from again. She hardly ever talked about it, and I only found out about it piecemeal.

The war continued. In November 1942, the Germans occupied the rest of France. Many of my school friends were deported and killed. The fact that Grisha and I were arrested at the very beginning gave us a break. We had run away before the wholesale deportations.

The mounting evidence of deportations and atrocities in France was now being reported in the world press. Drancy was known as a center for deportation to death camps. Foreign Jews had been handed over to the Germans. French Jews had been deported. Children were being deported. The French police were hunting for Jews in the streets, beating them viciously, and dragging them off like cattle. Every day, refugees were

stumbling across the border into Switzerland. The Swiss could no longer pretend not to know.

The mood in Switzerland was changing. The war was still going well for the Germans, but there were other winds in the air. The Americans were in the war, and the Germans were stalled at Stalingrad. Instead of sending new refugees back across the border, the Swiss began to give them political asylum.

One of our school friends who had escaped to Switzerland came to look us up. He had temporary papers, stating that he had just arrived and was being considered for asylum. His papers did not show his photograph, but gave only his name and date of birth. Grisha asked to borrow them for an evening, so that he could go out with his girl friend, and have a beer or have sex.

As fate would have it, that evening the Swiss police conducted a security check, closing streets, and demanding papers from everyone caught in their net. They were looking for illegal refugees. Grisha and his girl friend were questioned separately. Grisha told them that he was a new refugee, and showed them the temporary papers. His girl friend's papers identified her as a Swiss citizen.

However, she told the detective that Grisha was a Swiss from Lausanne, and that she had known him for five months. She was also five months' pregnant. She said he was the father of her child, and was going to marry her. I guess she thought that she could set him up as a patsy. Actually, he had only known her a few weeks. I don't know how he could have slept with her, without recognizing that she was pregnant. Grisha was a good poker player, but a very poor judge of women.

Since their stories didn't agree, they were both taken to the police station for further questioning. It turned out she didn't know anything specific about his activities or whereabouts, except for the last two weeks. However, she insisted that she knew him for a much longer time. Although it should have been obvious that she was lying, the police remained suspicious that he was the father of her child. To the police, the idea that a damned Jewish refugee might have impregnated a pure Swiss girl was anathema.

Furthermore, it was clear that the papers he carried weren't his. The Swiss police were not the Gestapo, but they were not born yesterday. At some point, four or five policemen pushed him around, took off his clothes and interrogated him naked. They beat him in the

genitals, which caused him great pain without leaving any bruises. Now Grisha was no hero. Under pressure, he told them his real name. Then they knew that he was one of the two fugitives who had been hiding from the police for a year. Under further pressure, he gave them the address of our room. I don't know whether I would have been a hero under such pressure. He signed anything they wanted, and they came to get me.

He told me later that when they had finished interrogating him, two policemen kept slapping him in the face, and calling him a goddam Jewish liar. When I saw him the next day, his face was still badly swollen. It was fifty percent larger than the day before.

5. In Police Custody.

They came for me about three or four in the morning. They tore the place apart looking for incriminating evidence. All they found were twenty brown bags filled with slices of dried bread. We knew that bread was rationed in France, and we were afraid that this would also happen in Switzerland. So we had sliced our bread, dried it on the stove so that it would not spoil, and stored it as hardtack. That is all they found.

They didn't beat me, but they slapped me around. They grabbed me by the shirt and threw me against the wall again and again. They wanted me to tell them if we were spies. Where did we get the money? What were the names of those who helped us? I didn't say anything. Finally they took me to the police station. On the way, one of them said, "Take a good look at Zurich. You will never see Zurich again." None of us could foresee that a few years later, with the war still raging, I would become a consultant on refugee affairs to the Zurich Police, or that I would enroll in a doctoral program in psychology at the University of Zurich.

I was brought into the Zurcher Cantons Polizei, and put into a temporary holding cell with eight other people. Grisha was there, but I wouldn't talk to him. He was bruised and swollen, and his spirit was broken. He was a wreck. I told several people in the cell that he had betrayed me to the police. Nobody would talk to him. Nobody would come near him. He was ostracized. I did not admit to myself that under such pressure, I might also have cracked.

The prisoners in the cell offered a revealing glimpse of the "crimes" penalized in Swiss society. They brought in an eleven-year-old boy. He had been caught with a wealthy, socially prominent Swiss woman, who was using him sexually. The boy was crying inconsolably, and calling her name. I don't know who he was, but he was not her child.

In one of her practices, she would defecate on his stomach, and then straddle him, rubbing her vagina in the shit. I thought it was interesting that they arrested the boy, but not the woman. She was protected by her wealth and status.

Another prisoner was an elderly man, probably in his early fifties. He looked like a farmer. He was the black sheep of a well-to-do, respectable family. He was constantly getting into trouble, and had been arrested a number of times for petty crimes, such as public drunkenness, breaking a window, or stealing a small item from a store. None of his crimes was serious, but his family was sick and tired of him. By Swiss law, anyone condemned for two or three similar crimes is considered a chronic offender. In his case the family wanted him committed to prison for life, and the judge went along with them. He was waiting to receive his life sentence.

A bearded Hungarian was brought into the cell. He had an aristocratic background and bearing, but he was penniless. He would move into an expensive Swiss hotel, run up a bill, and then disappear without paying. I don't know how long he managed to get away with it. It might have worked before the war, or in another country, but in Switzerland he had a short career. When he was arrested, he tried to commit suicide by cutting his wrists. At the same time he lost control of his bowels. They bandaged up both his wrists, but they didn't clean him up. When they brought him in, he stunk. He stood in front of the small sink in the cell and tried to wash himself.

Grisha and I remained in that cell for three months. We were constantly interrogated. They insisted that unless we were spies, we would never have been able to hide from the police for a whole year. They wanted to know who had helped us. We told them nothing. We never mentioned Mme. Kurz, the Polish Consulate, or the *Flichtlingshilfe*. We never mentioned the friends who had helped us. The landlord who rented the room to us was punished with a fine. However, he didn't really know who helped us, or where we got the money.

In the meantime the *Flichtlingshilfe* heard about our capture. We learned that we were out of favor with them, because of Grisha's involvement with his girl friend. The story was abroad that a refugee had impregnated a Swiss girl. Many people didn't want anything to do with us. Instead of being viewed as two unfortunate refugees who were apprehended after hiding for a year, we were now stigmatized with a nasty sexual story. The Swiss take such things seriously. To impregnate anybody is bad, but for a refugee to impregnate a Swiss girl was scandalous! My God! The story had a life of its own, even though the facts

belied it. None of our denials made any difference. Only the bad story remained. Nevertheless, the refugee Agency sent us prayer books. They felt it was important to show that we were religious, in order to invite better treatment for us. We also had a visit from a rabbi.

After a while, Sonia, Ella and Vym came forward, and asserted that they had helped us. Since they came voluntarily, they were not punished, nor were they even fined. They said we were not spies, and had done nothing wrong. We were just hiding because we were going to be deported. They were careful not to mention Mme. Kurz. Their admission that they knew us, and that we were not spies, was very helpful. Finally we were allowed to have visitors. Sonia's visits were a great comfort to me, and sustained me in my darkest hours.

There was one guard in this prison cell who was rabidly antisemitic. He harassed us constantly. Although we were entitled to have a bath once a week, he would only let us bathe every ten or twelve days. We were allowed to write letters, and I wrote to my friends about how terrible it was to be locked up in prison. There was always noise and commotion, with people constantly coming and going. There was a lot of snoring at night. We could not even take a bath once a week, although the rules allowed it. My letters were censored, and returned by the guard. He said I had written lies, and that he would not allow me to send such letters.

Visitors were allowed to spend fifteen minutes in the visiting room with us. Sonia's visits were very precious to me, but the guard would interrupt after five minutes, and say our time was up. Although prison rules allowed our friends to send us books, he would withhold them from us. He used to make fun of Grisha's name by mispronouncing it. It was a Russian name, Chvartskin, which would be difficult for most people to pronounce. He would draw out the "ch" sound, and say "Ch-ch-chvartskin. Only the Devil would have a name like that."

One day I asked him, "What have I ever done to you? Why are you so nasty?" He looked at me and he said, "You are a Jew, aren't you? Do you know what the Jews did in Switzerland?" I said "No." "Well," he said, "if you don't know, then I can't tell you." Finally one day I sent my friends a letter, saying how wonderful prison life was. "The food is wonderful, and I am being treated very well." The guard came in and said to me, "Von den Saulus is bekommen ein Paulus." Or "from Saul has come Paul." He took it literally, and allowed my letter to be sent. Of course my friends understood my message.

6. Under Army Control.

After three months in the temporary police cell, we were sent to a temporary holding area for refugees in Bern. It was run by the Swiss Army. Here, new refugees were quartered in a small school gymnasium. They came from France, from Germany, and from Poland via Germany. We slept on straw mattresses on the floor. We were guarded by Swiss soldiers who were basically friendly. We were constantly interrogated, this time by army officers. Apparently they still believed we might be spies.

A group of young Polish refugees had escaped from the center of Poland, all the way across Germany, and into Switzerland. It was an incredible journey. I cannot imagine how they got there, whether on foot, by train or in wagons. Along the way they had many harrowing adventures and narrow escapes. At one point, their leader had been captured and tortured by the Germans, but he did not betray them. He managed to escape, and to lead them into Switzerland. In their eyes he was a hero, whom they worshiped.

When they found out that Grisha and I were Jews, they would have nothing to do with us. They moved to one side of the small room, as far from us as possible. Not one of them would come within five feet of us. One of them said, "There is one good thing about Hitler. He will liberate Poland from the Jews. I hope he will stay in power long enough to kill every Jew."

At an auspicious moment, their leader confided to us that he was a Jew, posing as a Polish Christian. He had met the rest of the group somewhere along his escape route, and they had linked up together. He begged us not to tell his friends, because it would ruin his relationship with them. He didn't look Jewish. He had even gone to confession with them, to keep up the charade. He continued to stay with them on their side of the room, and to avoid us.

They spoke only broken German, which they had picked up from the German invaders of Poland. We had to act as interpreters whenever they spoke to the guards. I spoke German fluently by now, but it was Germanic German and not Swiss German. Grisha also spoke German pretty well. But even though we served them well as interpreters, our relationship with them did not improve.

They were taken to the Polish Consulate in Bern, where each one was debriefed separately. There were no Jews in this consulate, but only old-time Poles. The Consul gave each of them some money, and a promise of future support. Some time later, they

became unhappy with their stipend. They descended on the Consulate en masse, and demanded more money. They threatened to riot and to go on strike. In order to distract them, the Consul told them that their so-called leader was a damned Jew. The leader had made the mistake of revealing this to the Consul during his interrogation.

They were furious. They confronted their former leader, shouting, "You are a goddam Jew, and a liar. We will have nothing to do with you." He said to them, "Comrades, we went through everything together. Nothing has changed. I am still the same person." They spit on him, so that the spittle ran down his face. They said, "Once a dirty Jew always a dirty Jew. Get out." He came crawling over to our side of the room. That was the spirit of Poland, then and now, before the war and after the war, before "Solidarity" and after "Solidarity."

There was another interesting episode. I was taken to a military office for interrogation. While I waited outside, I met a young Jew who had escaped from Poland, and he told me his story. He was working in a garden for a Gestapo officer in Poland. The officer had appropriated the house and garden from a Polish family. There was an old Jew working in the garden alongside him. The officer was sitting on the veranda, with his Polish girl friend on his lap. The women decided to use the old Jew for target practice. She pulled out the officer's gun, aimed at her target, and pulled the trigger. She missed him. The officer told her to try again, but she missed a second time. He said "I will show you how to do it." He took the gun, aimed at the old Jew and killed him.

During his interview, the Jew told his story to the Swiss lieutenant. Reports of deportations and atrocities in Poland were now widespread. The Swiss could no longer pretend not to know about them. However, the lieutenant chose not to believe his story, saying it was a pack of lies. He grabbed the man by the neck, opened the door and propelled him out, yelling, "Verfluchter Jude," which means "accursed Jew."

A few years later, when I was established in Switzerland, and living with Sonia, I wrote a short account of this episode. Sonia submitted it to the newspaper, Die Welt Woche, under her own name. The article was entitled, "Herr Oberlieutenant, was sagen sie heute dazu?" "Herr Oberlieutenant, what do you say now?" I took the precaution of omitting the officer's name.

It was published on the first page of the newspaper. At that time, stories of German atrocities were pouring out of Poland. Sonia received many letters from readers asking

her to identify the officer. The Swiss Army establishment was furious. It was clear that Sonia had not written the story. They demanded to know the name of the refugee who had written it, but she would not reveal it. Had she done so, they would have gone after me, even then.

We were usually escorted to the interrogation office by two Swiss soldiers. They were really nice guys. Once, on the way home we passed a movie house, where they were showing the classic Russian film, "Alexander Nevski." We had a few Swiss francs, and so we persuaded them to see the movie with us. We paid their admission. There we were, two refugees with two Swiss soldiers guarding them, sitting in a movie house in Bern and watching a Russian movie. It must have been a strange sight.

Other refugees in the holding area were now given political asylum, and released to work camps. We began to relax and breathe more freely. We thought our troubles would soon be over, and that they would let us stay. One morning an order came. Without any explanation, Grisha and I were handcuffed, and taken by train to a town called Lenzburg. It is the place where they manufacture the famous Lenzburg preserves, which are highly regarded for their quality. Lenzburg is also the site of a maximum security prison, equivalent to Sing Sing in NY State, where habitual and hardened criminals are confined.

7. Lenzburg Prison

The prison was isolated from the town of Lenzburg. I remember that the building was about five stories high. The interior looked like prisons shown in movies. Each floor had two parallel rows of cells facing each other, along the length of the building. Each cell door opened onto a catwalk or balcony. At the ends of each catwalk, there were metal staircases connecting the five tiers. Guards were patrolling everywhere.

We were taken to an entry office on the first floor, where they asked us to empty our pockets. We were thoroughly searched, and given uniforms, underwear and nightclothes. They put us into a small reception cell, and handed us a volume about half an inch thick, explaining the rules of the prison. I still have that book somewhere. The first rule was, "Silence is the obligation of every prisoner. A prisoner should only speak when spoken to." We had to study the rules for several days, so that later we could not claim that we didn't know them. I don't know what they did with prisoners who couldn't read or write.

Since smoking was not allowed, they took our cigarettes away. Under the pillow of one of the beds, we found a match and two cigarettes. Grisha and I had a long debate over

this. Were they left there on purpose by somebody who cared for us? Perhaps someone was trying to cheer us up. Were they left for somebody else? Or was it a trap to set us up from the beginning for some kind of punishment? I said to Grisha, "We do not know how long we will stay here. It may be a very long time. It's not worth while to get into trouble over this." We broke up the cigarettes and the match, and threw them into a bucket which served as a toilet. After a few days we were each put in solitary confinement, and we didn't see each other again until we were released.

At no time did anyone ever tell ever us why we were confined. We did not know what the charges were, if any. We were imprisoned without a hearing. We never had a trial, or received a sentence. There was no appeal possible. It was a devastating blow. We felt that we had already suffered so much, through no fault of our own. We had done nothing wrong. Why should we be persecuted at a time when other refugees were being treated decently? We couldn't figure it out.

Years later, when I worked for the Swiss police as a consultant, I looked up my file. It said I was confined for being an "antimonial element." I confronted the man who had signed my commitment papers, and asked him why he had sent me there. He said, "I don't know. I don't have time to read such papers. I sign whatever they give me to sign."

It is hard to say why it happened. I think the Zurcher Cantons Polizei were furious with us. The idea that two refugees had been able to hide for a whole year without being caught was a tremendous blow to their pride. We could not tell them about Mme. Kurz, and so they were free to deny that they had intended to deport us. They wanted to cover up the embarrassing fact that they had deported so many refugees to the border, and to their deaths. According to their official story, they had given us our freedom in Bern, told us to register once a day, and had intended to give us political asylum. Although we had been treated so well, we had gone into hiding for no reason. They insisted that we really were antisocial elements. In addition there was the story about Grisha impregnating a Swiss girl. Somehow it also rubbed off on me.

When I checked into the prison, I filled out a form to indicate my religion. At first I wrote that I had none. The officer said I was making a big mistake. "If you have no religion, everyone will think you are an atheist. Around here, we do not like atheists very much. They are suspected of being Marxists or Communists, or just bad elements. You will be better off if you profess some religion." So I put down Jewish. It turned out he was right. We were not treated as badly as atheists would have been. The *Flichtlingshilfe*

immediately sent us prayer books, which made us look good. Being religious is an asset in all countries. As an added bonus, Grisha and I were excused from attending church on Sunday.

Lenzburg had three categories of prisoners. Some were serving a life sentence, like the middle-aged man I had met, who had been committed by his family. There were some serving time for robbery and murder, and there were political prisoners. All of us wore the same blue uniform, with a jacket and pants. Each prisoner wore a button. The button for lifers was red, and for political prisoners, green. I think the third was yellow. Each prisoner also wore a heavy metal clip inscribed with a number. My number was 305.

Inside our cells, we had to wear felt slippers to minimize noise. Outside of our cells, we wore wooden shoes or clogs. They clanked when we walked on the metal floors and staircases. At night we wore nightgowns, and our clothes and wooden clogs were hung on a hook outside our cells, to allow the guards to inspect our cells, and to prevent us from escaping. As far as I know nobody had ever escaped from Lenzburg.

My cell was very small. The furniture consisted of a tiny table, a stool and a bed. During the day, the bed was held in an upright position against the wall by a chain, so that you could not sit or lie on it. At night it occupied most of the room. I was never allowed to lie down on the floor, or sit on the table. There was a barred window just below the ceiling, which let in some daylight. All I could see through it was a bit of sky. The small window in the cell door was covered by a locked wooden panel, which was opened only for serving meals. There was no running water, and so I used a bucket as a toilet, and drank water from a container.

Every prisoner had to spend a three month probationary period in solitary confinement, to demonstrate good behavior. Every prisoner had to work. Those who were unwilling to work would have their meat rations cut. During the probationary period, you worked in your cell. After that, you were allowed to work in a workshop. If you demonstrated further good behavior, you might eventually be allowed to work outside, in the fields or the vegetable garden.

The prison had a strict routine. Every morning at five or six o'clock, the guard opened one cell door at a time. The prisoner retrieved his clothes, and put on the wooden clogs. He hung his nightgown on the hook outside. Then he went out to empty his toilet bucket, and to fill the container with drinking water. Finally, he was locked in the cell again, and the

next cell door was opened.

During the day there was an exercise break. Prisoners like me who worked in their cells were led out, twenty or thirty at a time, into a small yard surrounded by high walls. We walked around in a circle with our hands behind our backs, separated from each other by four or five feet. We kept a measured pace. There were one or two guards at each corner of the yard. We were not allowed to talk to the guards, or to each other. If a shoelace became untied, you would signal the guard for permission to step out in front of him, and tie it. After about fifteen or twenty minutes, we were led back, one by one, into our cells.

The guard served all meals through the window in the cell door. After each meal, he would replace and lock the wooden cover. There was no conversation. For breakfast, we were given some coffee, and bread with preserves and margarine. The meals were simple and wholesome, and some of them tasted very good. They served us rösti¹⁶, meat, potatoes, vegetables and bread. Occasionally we got a cookie or a piece of cake. Even if you had to stay there twenty years, you would come out healthy.

After the evening meal, the lights remained on for an hour or two so that we could read. Before the lights went out, the guard would unlock the beds and lower them. We had to hang our clothes and shoes outside, and go to sleep. During the night, the catwalks were patrolled by guards with Doberman guard dogs.

The prison was totally self-supporting. The prisoners raised their own vegetables, fruit, and potatoes, and anything else we could use. There were workshops where prisoners repaired shoes and clothing, and manufactured most of the items we needed. The laundry was run by the prisoners, and so was the library.

There was a church which also served as a theater. Once a month we saw a movie, usually a slapstick comedy. We would file into the theater one at a time. Each seat was enclosed in a cubicle, so that you could look straight ahead of you, but could not see or communicate with the prisoner on either side. Once in a while, we would receive political explanations of what was happening in the war. These were illustrated by newsreels. The war was going well for the Germans, who were counterattacking at Stalingrad. It was the fall of 1942.

¹⁶Rösti is a kind of Swiss potato pancake, a Swiss national dish.

Cigarettes were not allowed. Newspapers and magazines were not allowed. The prison library had a catalogue, from which we could select library books once a week. Each of us could also write a letter once a week. I wrote to Sonia regularly, and received censored letters from her.

I was assigned to make small paper bags for Nestle, a Swiss company which manufactures chocolate and other products. The bags were designed to hold individual portions of powdered instant hot chocolate. My supervisor, who was called the Meister, was a small man with a thin neck and squeaky voice. He showed me how to make the bags. You spread the papers, and put a little glue on them in the right places. We were supposed to work fast, and make at least a few hundred bags a day.

There was a wage scale. If you could make enough bags, you could earn a few rappen¹⁷ a day. You received credit for your earnings, which were given to you when you left the prison. On the other hand, the clothes and shoes with which you arrived were repaired in the prison workshop, whether they needed it or not, and the cost was deducted from your savings. In this way the prison officials milked the system, so that I received very little money upon my release.

At first my performance was poor, but the Meister was satisfied that I was trying. He was a nice man. He used to reassure me in his guttural German, “Übung macht den meister,” or “Practice makes the master.” I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. He was right. After a while I could make a thousand bags a day, and I started to accumulate rappen in my account. I had a vision of a future in which I spent the rest of my life there, turning out thousands of perfect bags a day, with the Meister enthusiastically nodding his approval.

I was beginning to feel desperate. I was angry and depressed at the great injustice which had befallen me. There was no defined time limit for my stay in prison. I had lost all hope of being treated like other refugees. I wrote petitions and letters, to no avail. After a while, the director called me to his office, and told me to stop writing. I was making a nuisance of myself. I was going to stay there until the end of the war, or until further orders. At the moment, no further orders were anticipated. So I tried to find solace from my tribulations in reading, as I had in my childhood. Sunday was a free day. I could read all day. First, I reread Dostoevski’s the Brothers Karamazov. I also read books by Tolstoy and Kafka. I had never understood Dostoevski or Kafka as well as I did when I

¹⁷A rappen is a hundredth of a Swiss franc.

read their books in prison.

My friends outside were trying to help in every possible way. Ella and her husband contacted various Oxford groups in Switzerland. In one group, they found a man who was a guard in Lenzburg prison. There wasn't much he could do for me, because he worked in another section of Lenzburg. He began to visit me on Sundays, whenever he had the day off. He would come into my cell, shake hands, and wish me a good Sunday. After his visits, I would break down and sob for an hour.

There was one guard who was cruel and hateful, who would find excuses to make my life more miserable. I guess there is one in every prison. He would come in the morning to inspect my cell. Everything had to be in its place, within a few centimeters. He would push me around, scream and yell, and find fault with everything I did.

After the first three weeks, Sonia was allowed to visit me. We met in a visiting room where we sat across from each other, five or six feet apart, with a guard sitting between us. She brought me a package, which the guard had to examine. It contained fresh fruit, dried fruit, and chocolates. She had just come back from a ski trip, and she had a beautiful tan. She looked very pretty. Sonia tried her best to cheer me up, but I hated her for looking so healthy and fresh. I resented her cheerfulness, and her assurances that my ordeal would soon be over. I felt she was only giving me false hopes. The only way I could survive in prison was by telling myself I would be there for a long time. Otherwise, my impatience would be unendurable. My anger was increasing, and it had no outlet. I was so miserable that it didn't matter to me that the Germans, ravaged by the Russian winter, were retreating from Stalingrad, and the tides of war were turning against them. It was the winter of 1943.

I was slowly going off my rocker. I began to feel that since I was confined to prison unjustly, I might as well commit a crime. Then I would know why I was there. I thought I would attack one of the guards. Which of the guards should I attack? The nasty one? Kill him or hurt him? I said, no. I would attack the kind guard who came on Sunday, and made me cry. Then I started to think that perhaps I should commit suicide, so that I wouldn't have to face those endless days in prison. Sometimes, in a better mood, I would appreciate the fact that at least I was safe there. I would survive. So I wavered back and forth. The nights were long, and it was hard to sleep. There were prisoners singing sad, crazy songs in their cells, or crying and yelling all night.

One night, in the middle of the night, there was a knock at my door. The guard outside shouted for me to get dressed. Half asleep, I followed him down about five flights of metal stairs, with my wooden clogs clanking enough to wake the dead. I was brought to the director's office. It was a long narrow room, with a light at one end, revealing a middle-aged man at a desk. There was a line on the floor about four feet in front of him, which I wasn't supposed to cross.

He said to me, "You are a Jew, aren't you?" I said "Yes." He asked me, "Do you get any messages?" I was terrified. I thought he was referring to a possible prison conspiracy. Then he said, "Messages from God." I vehemently denied getting any messages from God. He said "Right now the Jews are very low like this." He pointed toward the ground. "But one day they will be high like that." He raised his hand. "Dismissed." I thought to myself, "One day I will leave here, and I will write this story, but this idiot is going to stay here forever."

I remember the night that I seriously considered suicide. I thought that if I tore up my nightgown, I could make a rope, and hang myself from the bars on the window. But I was afraid. I thought it would hurt too much, that the rope might break, that the window was not high enough. I suppose I was still sane enough. I wanted to go on living. Many years later, I was again tempted to commit suicide, but I didn't do it that time either.

In the meantime, Sonia, Ella and Vym were relentlessly going from one office to another, pressuring officials to release Grisha and me. They pointed out that we had run away and hidden from the police in order to avoid deportation and death. We were locked up in prison, even though we had done nothing wrong. Once, while Sonia was pleading our case, the official looked up at her and said, "They have only been there three months! Why are you making such a fuss? We have people who have spent many years in prison." Yes, there were refugees and even Swiss people who were interned in prison "until further notice," without a trial, and for many years. They didn't have anybody outside to plead for them, and so they were forgotten. If it wasn't for Sonia and the others who talked, pleaded, and wrote petitions and letters, we would have stayed there for a very long time, and perhaps for life. To us, the three months already seemed like an eternity.

One day a guard told me to pack my things. Grisha and I were transferred together to another cell. We were about to be released. When we saw each other, we exploded in a spate of talking. We both talked constantly for two days. Neither of us listened to the other. We were just delighted to be able to talk, to make noise again. After two days, they

returned our clothes. We signed a release saying that we were in good health, and had been well treated. They gave us the money in our accounts, and told us we could go to Zurich and spend the weekend with friends. On Monday morning we were to present ourselves at a labor camp for refugees, a short distance from Zurich.

They were supposed to give us tickets for the train from Lenzburg to Zurich, but the tickets had not yet arrived. So they took us outside, and showed us the road to the Lenzburg railroad station. They said we had time to catch the next train if we went there directly.

It was a beautiful sunny day in the countryside. We had not walked outdoors as free men since our student days in France, years ago. We were confused by being outdoors, by the heady air of freedom. We were so afraid we would miss the train that we started to run. First we ran in the wrong direction. Then we turned, and ran toward the town. By the time we got there, we had missed the train. We were heartbroken. I was anxious to see Sonia, but the next train was three hours away.

We walked around Lenzburg town. Now for the first time in months, I was able to buy cigarettes, and a newspaper. I smoked a cigarette, and got dizzy. In the meantime some prison guards rode by in a car, and told us that our tickets had just arrived at the prison. They said that if we went back, we could get the tickets. Grisha didn't want to go back. He said we could buy the tickets ourselves. Since we had very little money, I ran back while Grisha waited at the station. I knocked at the prison door and asked for the tickets. After some confusion on their part, they gave them to me. I ran back to town, and we took the next train to Zurich.

There was a postscript to this incident. Later the prison officials conducted an investigation. Nobody had ever returned to prison voluntarily. What was the matter with those two refugees? Why were they running back and forth to town? Why did they miss the train on purpose? They were probably up to no good. Maybe they were carrying messages from other prisoners, or conniving to do something wrong in Lenzburg. We were under suspicion for a long time before the inquiry was finally dropped.

We spent the weekend with Sonia and her family. We were drunk with the feeling of freedom. Our problems were over. Now we were like the other refugees, finally safe in Switzerland. On Monday, we took the train to the labor camp.

8. The Labor Camp:

There were separate work camps for men and women. Our camp consisted of barracks, each housing thirty men, with upper and lower bunks for sleeping. The mattresses were sacks filled with straw. The food was wholesome and plentiful. We had potatoes, meat, vegetables and bread. Nobody went hungry. In the evening and on weekends we were free to walk a few kilometers to the nearest hamlet, which consisted of a few stores, a place to have a beer, a post office, and some houses.

The work was very hard. Sometimes we cleared fields by collecting and removing rocks. Sometimes we cut turf, to be dried as briquets, which could be burned. Sometimes we had to dig up large trees by the roots. They were pine trees, forty to fifty feet tall, having trunks two to three feet in diameter, and extended root systems. We cut off the branches and the roots, and loggers carted off the trunks. All the work was manual. My hands became bloodied and callused very quickly.

The refugees ranged in age from late teens to middle age. They were of many nationalities, including German, Austrian, Czech, Bulgarian, and Hungarian. Some were husky and strong, while others were fragile. None of them was used to such heavy physical labor. It was particularly hard on the frail and middle-aged people. I have seen artists and musicians who cried at night, because they were ruining their precious hands. The irony was that the work was totally useless. By clearing the trees, the Swiss thought they could transform forests into arable land. They wanted to increase their wheat production, and thus become less dependent on German imports. But it was a fantasy to think that this land would ever be suitable for farming.

The camp commander was strict but fair. We could smoke, and listen to the radio. Every six weeks, we had a three-day furlough, and a free train ticket to any destination in Switzerland, provided we could show that we had a place to stay, or enough money to hire a room at an inn.

I thought the refugees who complained about the labor camp were crazy. I thought it was paradise. We were safe. We had a furlough every six weeks! I could go to Zurich and be with Sonia. I couldn't believe that anybody would complain about it.

One day there was an amusing incident. Our supervisor told us that an inspector was coming to evaluate our work. We were eager to please him, especially because he promised us an extra furlough if we did well. In order to make him look good, we

loosened the roots of the trees in advance, so that they would topple easily during the inspection. As man proposed, God disposes. Just as the inspector arrived, a strong wind came up and the giant trees began to topple in all directions like match sticks. It sounded like an artillery bombardment. Everyone ran for his life, including the inspector. Needless to say, we did not get the extra furlough.

Once we were taken to the French part of Switzerland to work in the vineyards. The French women usually employed there could not cross the border because of the German occupation of France. We received overtime pay for working more than eight hours a day. I came to appreciate the backbreaking work of the French women in producing wine. I was able to save some money, with which I bought a plain gold ring for Sonia as a symbol of our love.

Scattered among the grapevines were trees bearing the largest, juiciest black cherries I have ever seen. We stuffed ourselves with cherries, and hid some in our jackets to take back to camp. The farmers accused us of stealing them. They shook our jackets until the cherries fell out. Then they attacked us furiously with pitchforks. Somehow our supervisor finally managed to restore peace.

After a few months in the labor camp, I too started to complain. Living in the barracks with thirty farting men, who wore foul-smelling socks, was no picnic. The kitchen work was boring, and the manual labor very hard. So I forgot my previous troubles very quickly and began to hope for a better life than this. That is human nature. I am not sure whether I stayed in the labor camp six months, or longer. It is vague in my mind. But after a while, I wanted desperately to be released.

As the Germans suffered more and more defeats in Russia, the Swiss treatment of refugees became ever more lenient. The Swiss wanted to hedge their bets, and get some good marks from the Allies, just in case Germany lost the war. They were now permitting refugees to resume any studies interrupted by the war, provided they could be admitted to a valid program, and could pay the tuition. In that case, the refugees would be allowed to leave the labor camp.

I applied to the Polish Consulate, which gave me permission to continue my studies, but only in engineering. Desperate to leave the camp, I applied to the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule in Zurich. They accepted me, pending an entrance examination on the courses I had taken in Grenoble. In the meantime, they let me register for some

courses. After all, I had already completed most of the three-year program at Grenoble.

But when I applied to the Swiss authorities, they told me that under no circumstances would I ever be allowed to study in Zurich. The Zurich Police had a long memory. It was unthinkable for me to go to another city, and be away from Sonia. For the first time I wrote to Mme. Kurz in Bern, and asked her to help me. I had not seen nor heard from her since the fateful dinner at her house on Yom Kippur, 1941.

Mme. Kurz wrote a letter to the authorities, saying "I told those two young men that they were going to be deported. I had received this information from the Chief of Police. They are not antisocial elements. They were only trying to save themselves, to prolong their lives for a while. It is time to stop persecuting them and put the issue to rest." Since there were no copying machines, she sent me a handwritten copy. That did it. The police gave me permission to study in Zurich.

Part IV: Free at Last.

1. Studies in Zurich

I came to Zurich, happy and free. But the Zurich Police were not finished with me. They ordered me to report to a detective once a week. I was placed under a curfew between seven in the evening, and seven in the morning. During those hours, I had to get special permission to go out, and I had to notify a detective of my whereabouts. In other words, I was still under surveillance by the police. Other refugees were not limited in this way. I still felt pursued and persecuted, and I had frequent anxiety attacks. These police restrictions on my freedom remained in force for several years. They were lifted only when the Zurich Police hired me as a consultant on refugee affairs, a job which required constant travel.

With my stipend from the Polish Consulate, I rented a small cold water flat. I had to break the ice to get washed every morning, but it was mine. Occasionally I had meals with Sonia and her family who lived nearby. Sometimes I would eat in one of the Zurcher Frauen Verein restaurants, which were run by the Zurich Women's Organization, a charitable and temperance society. These were clean, alcohol-free restaurants for low-income people, where they served apple cider, beautiful rösti, lovely soups and excellent bread for a very low price. The food was delicious and nourishing. Many years later when I visited Switzerland, I tried to find some of these restaurants, just to order a dish of rösti. They didn't exist anymore. In fact I couldn't find any good rösti in all of Switzerland. The best rösti I ever tasted was in Zurcher Frauen Verein, and believe it or not, in Lenzburg Prison.

Now I had to resume my hated engineering studies. I attended some classes at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, and found that I had forgotten most of what I learned in Grenoble. The Hochschule was the Swiss equivalent of MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the level of their courses was too advanced for me. It would have been futile for me to take the entrance exam, because I would surely have failed it.

Besides, I really wanted to study psychology. I was delighted to learn that standards had changed since I had cobbled together my insane plan to become a psychologist in France. At least in Switzerland, psychology was now emerging as a profession in its own right. You no longer needed a medical degree to practice psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, vocational counseling or clinical testing.

I located the Institute for Applied Psychology, or Institut für Angewandte Psychologie,

in Zurich. It was a private institution, which trained practitioners, and which offered a diploma in Applied Psychology. Their program differed radically from university programs, which trained only academic psychologists. The Institute was run by Dr. Biäsch, **PICTURE** who was a man of vision. It had an outstanding faculty of practitioners, most of whom were not physicians. There was a small select group of students, **PICTURE** who either worked in the field, or were training to do so. There were two teachers to every student, so that the relationship between professors and students was very close. The Institute was sustained by high tuition fees, and by work it did for corporations. It was an extraordinary school, the likes of which I have never seen before or after. But before I could study there, I had to overcome a few more hurdles.

Dr. Biäsch was very sympathetic to my situation. He gave me a statement, saying that industrial or applied psychology would be very useful in engineering. I took it to the appropriate Swiss official, who promptly said, “No, the law is the law and the rules are the rules. There are no exceptions.” I told him that industrial psychology was really a branch of engineering, and that it was used in factories. I begged and pleaded, and finally broke down and cried, but he was firm.

So I reverted to an old technique. “I have to stay here until you give me permission. My whole life depends on it.” At first he said I would have to leave. Then I told him about all the things that had happened to me during the war. I literally fell on my knees and begged him. I said, “I am going to stay here as long as it takes.” After an hour or two, he agreed to let me leave the labor camp, and to study at the Institute.

Then I went to the Polish Consulate, and tried to persuade them to continue supporting me. There I met with rigid opposition. Poland needed engineers, and not psychologists. They withdrew all financial support. At that point, the Swiss authorities threatened to send me back to the labor camp, unless I could find some other funding for my studies.

The Institute’s fees were very high, but Dr. Biäsch came to my rescue by deferring them until an unspecified future time. Years later, Dr. Biäsch visited me in New York, where I was practicing psychoanalysis. I wined and dined him. When he suggested that I make a donation to the Institute, I was delighted to do so.

I applied to the International Organization for the Support of Intellectual Refugees, which gave me a stipend. Sonia’s family then offered me free room and board. So at last I was able to leave the labor camp, and begin my studies at the Institute.

I was very quickly recognized as one of the best students. Now, for the first time in my life, I loved my courses. Psychology had always been my hobby. Now it became my consuming passion. I felt as if I were playing and having fun instead of working. I was entertained all day, just by learning about Freud, Jung, the Rorschach test, the Barrow test, all of it. I soaked it up like a sponge.

Pulver, the graphology¹⁸ teacher, was very famous, one of the best in Europe. Oskar Pfister, a minister, was another of our teachers. He had introduced psychoanalysis into Switzerland, in collaboration with Bleuler. At this time, he was very old and somewhat deaf. Conti **PICTURE** was one of the best-read people in Switzerland. He had been in a sanitarium with tuberculosis for many years, and during that time, he had read extensively, and remembered everything he read. He was the editor of a remarkable magazine, which combined art and literature. I am not sure of the name, but it sounded like Milieu. Whenever I heard a lecture by Conti, I was tempted to go to the library and read everything in sight.

The pragmatic, innovative approach at the Institute was a revelation to me. There were no grades. You took an exam just to spend a few hours talking to the professor. Then he would say, "Well, I think you should read a little more about this," or "I think you are prepared to go on." Before we could study the Rorschach test, we had to take the test ourselves, so that the results would not be distorted by any prior knowledge of the ink blots or the rules for interpreting them. These results were stored in the Institute's archives. If at some future time, we needed to furnish our test results, we would not have to rely on the skewed results of a new test.

One of the first things we learned was that it is all right to make mistakes. It is always better to attempt something than to say, "I can't." The best way to learn is by analyzing your mistakes. If you don't risk being wrong, you will learn nothing. In making mistakes, you may also make a fool of yourself. However, since everyone is in the same boat, it is all right to make a fool of yourself. In fact, they designed situations which forced us to make fools of ourselves. "Mann darf sich blamieren."

One of these situations involved graphology. Now graphology is not a science, nor does it achieve results by magic. Theoretically if you are skilled at it, you can derive a lot of information from it. But it is not perfect. The results depend on the intelligence,

¹⁸Graphology is handwriting analysis.

knowledge, experience and intuition of the analyst.

We had a graphology workshop, in which the professor would give us a sample of a person's handwriting, and tell us the age and sex of the person. From this we had to draw conclusions about the person's behavior. We had to describe how this person performed routine acts, such as eating breakfast, or walking to the bus. That forced us to break away from clichés, and academic psychobabble. Later we could check our answers against the facts. In doing so, we often made mistakes, and we sometimes made fools of ourselves, but it was a marvelous learning experience.

A lot of very good things were happening to me. Dr. Biäsch hired me to work in his private library, where I collected material for his publications, and did research for him. I also helped in research studies at the Institute. Since there were no copying machines, I copied scholarly papers on the typewriter, and sold them to supplement my income. Sonia helped a great deal. So I managed to hold body and soul together.

There was a student called Eddie Noser, whom I assisted with his studies. He was a wonderful human being. Although he didn't have much money, he went to the office one day and paid my tuition. He told them not to tell me who had paid it, but the information leaked out.

After about two years at the Institute, Dr. Biäsch began to urge me to take courses at the University. He felt that it was vital for me to get a doctorate. Without the degree, it would be difficult for me to practice psychoanalysis anywhere else in the world. I was reluctant, because academic psychology did not interest me, and the degree requirements would distract me from my training as a psychoanalyst. I wanted to finish my training as soon as possible, in case I received my visa to the United States, and had to leave Switzerland abruptly.

However, I recognized the wisdom of his advice. I applied to the Swiss National Student Union, which gave me a stipend for studies at the University. I enrolled in classes in educational psychology, and philosophy. In the Medical Faculty, I took courses in psychiatry, neurology and anatomy of the brain. There was a particularly valuable course in "Heil Pedagogik," which is the science of treating mentally retarded and organically sick children. It was taught by Professor Heidelmann.

To fulfill the degree requirements at the University, I had to take Latin and one other

foreign language. I received credit for Latin, because I had studied it in gymnasium for eight years. For my second language, I chose Hebrew. I could not chose German, because it was not a foreign language in Zurich. I didn't dare to take French, because I was not well versed in French literature. I thought that I could manage Hebrew with a minimum of time and effort.

Hebrew was taught at the Faculty of Divinity, as part of clerical studies. My professor, Dr. Zimmerli, was very friendly to me. He invited me to his home several times, and to some of his seminars with selected students. This was very unusual. In Switzerland, professors were important dignitaries, who kept aloof from their students. I was flattered by his attention, but I suspected that he wanted to convert me to Christianity. Later this proved to be the case. It became a big problem for me.

2. Consulting on Refugee Affairs:

In late 1943 and early 1944, the war was going badly for the Germans. The Swiss began to worry about their image. They had shamelessly cooperated with the Nazis, in order to protect their own hides, and to be left alone. Now they were afraid of world opinion. They began to think more seriously about helping refugees. They also thought it was time to educate them, to prepare them for return to their home countries, so that they would not remain in Switzerland. The Swiss surely did not want all those foreigners there.

As a matter of fact, the Auslandswitte, or the Swiss citizens who lived abroad were also regarded as foreigners. When the war overran the countries in which they were living, they started flocking back. The Swiss authorities put them up in schools and inns. Although they were treated somewhat better than refugees, there was no love lost on them.

These were a different breed of Swiss, who were less introverted, and less withdrawn. They had tried to break away and make new lives outside of their lovely but inbred little country, which was the epitome of bureaucracy, and middle class ideas. In Switzerland, the main preoccupation was to accumulate as much money as possible, and spend as little as possible. This was not so true of young people, but they were held in tight rein by their families, and given very little freedom. After the war, this began to change.

The refugee camps were under the jurisdiction of the police. They set up a civilian bureau to administer the camps, and to sort out refugees for educational programs. I was employed as a tester and clinical interviewer, to evaluate their personalities and abilities. Ironically, my position gave me access to my own police record. It said I had been

pursued by the police, and sent to the penitentiary for being an “antisocial element.”

I worked with two Viennese men. One had been a vocational counselor before the war, and the other had studied some psychology and psychiatry in Vienna. We traveled to refugee camps all over Switzerland, and conducted interviews and tests. Although my salary was small, I was earning enough to pay my expenses. I also received train tickets for job-related travel, and I could use the tickets occasionally on weekends.

Sonia and I continued our intimate relationship. We were compatible in many ways, and I was very much attached to her. Yet we were growing apart. I was beginning to change and grow, to become freer and more independent. She was a few years older than I, and she was set in her ways. She didn't fit into the new circle in which I was moving. I began to feel an interest in other women. I didn't do anything about it, except flirt a little at parties. I brought her with me to parties, hoping that she would also flirt, but it didn't work. She really wanted me, and nobody else. The idea that I would ever abandon Sonia was totally unacceptable to me. She had virtually saved my life many times over. She had experienced so much sorrow in her own life. She didn't need another disappointment from me.

Now I was studying hard at the Institute, traveling and working at my job, taking classes at the University, and writing papers for my courses. In addition, I was selling my short stories to various family magazines and newspapers to earn extra money. As a refugee, I was not allowed to publish them under my own name. We used Sonia's name instead. Sonia typed the stories and edited my German. They paid only a few francs for each publication, but every little bit helped.

I have already mentioned some of the stories I published. There was the one about my friend Nicolas, who was wounded in the Spanish Civil War, and who later died in a concentration camp. It was published in a daily newspaper, under the title, “For a Package of Tobacco.” The story, “Herr Oberlieutenant, was sagen sie heute dazu?”, was published on the first page of the newspaper, Die Welt Woche. Then there was the story entitled, “Why did Madeleine cry?” Another story described how I ran terrified through the streets of Zurich, lost in the fog until Lasser found me. There were many others. In every case, the public response was tremendous. We received fan mail regularly.

Finally in 1945, the Allies occupied Germany and the war came to an end. Among the survivors who were liberated from concentration camps like Auschwitz, Dachau and

Birchenau, there were many orphaned children. To show good will, the Swiss admitted three hundred refugees between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. They were survivors, meaning they had seen and done everything, from murder to mayhem to maybe eating human flesh. They were not children. They were very much afraid of anyone in uniform, especially someone who spoke German. In one of the worst possible arrangements, they were put under the control of the Swiss Army.

The *Flichtlingshilfe* took charge of their care. The Zurich Police transferred me to the *Flichtlingshilfe*, where I was employed as a psychologist. I was rapidly becoming known throughout Switzerland as a specialist in refugee affairs. First of all I spoke Yiddish, Polish, Russian, French and German, so that I was able to communicate with all groups of refugees. I received a better salary, and a ticket on the trains at all times. I had a secretary, and a private office at the *Flichtlingshilfe*.

One of my assignments was to represent the *Flichtlingshilfe* at meetings in Bern. At some of these meetings, I met the same army and police officials who had put me in the penitentiary. They called me Herr Doctor, although I didn't have a Ph.D. yet. When I told them I was not a doctor, they said, "Well, you will be some day." I realized that they gave me the title to make themselves feel better. If they had to deal with a lousy refugee, and a Jew no less, at least he should be a doctor. As for committing me to prison, they didn't want to talk about it. Bureaucrats sign papers which are placed on their desks. Who has time to read them?

My job was very difficult. The youngsters were housed in camps, which were really large rental apartments and living facilities, dispersed all over Switzerland. The house parents caring for them were social workers, and summer camps counselors. They had no idea what to do with these children. They had never before encountered the kind of problems which arose.

For instance, one night I got a phone message that there was an emergency in Geneva. I boarded a train in the middle of the night, and was in camp the next day. The children were rioting, and promoting a hunger strike. The house parents were barricaded in their room, terrified to come out, and the cook was barricaded in another room. The youngsters were outside their doors, brandishing knives.

What had happened is hard to believe. The cook had served them some smoked herring. They had never seen anything like it before. They thought it was rotten fish, because it

was soft and smelly. So they grabbed knives and went after the cook.

I always had to improvise. In this instance, I brought out the cook, and in front of the youngsters, I berated him severely for misbehaving. He should not have served them rotten fish, and he would be punished. So the children shouted me down. They screamed that he was *their* cook, and that I was a meddling outsider from Zurich. They started to defend him, and the situation was defused. Eventually when they calmed down, I was able to explain to them what herring was.

Another time, I was called to a camp outside of Bern. The refugees were not supposed to go to Bern, or to mingle with the local population. However, a few enterprising youngsters, sixteen and seventeen years old, had climbed out of second and third story windows, and gone into town at night. They went to night clubs, picked up girls, and committed many thefts. They also engaged in fist fights with Swiss youngsters.

I had to avoid public scandal, or friction with the Swiss people at any cost. In Bern, I took the ringleader of the group aside, and said I was appointing him as the guardian of the group. He alone, and maybe one other person of his choice, could go to town on the honor system, but the rest could not go. He was responsible for them. I made the thief the guardian of the others, and it worked. They listened to him, because they were afraid of him.

On one occasion, a young man was invited to spend some time with a Swiss family, as a good will gesture toward a concentration camp survivor. He managed to impregnate the daughter of the house, who was under the age of consent. We had to keep it quiet, and out of the newspapers. So I obtained funds from the president of the Flüchtlingshilfe, and arranged for an abortion.

These refugees had to carry special papers, which entitled them to reduced train fares. In one incident, a youngster refused to show his document to a train conductor. Since the conductor wore a uniform, and spoke German, the youngster thought he was a Gestapo officer. The conductor finally said, "You have to get off the train at the next station." So the youngster pulled a knife and attacked the conductor.

The police were called, and they arrested the refugee and took him off the train. In order to prevent a trial and a public scandal, I had to intervene. I explained to the police and to the judge that the incident was due to a misunderstanding. This was the kind of emergency

that I had to handle every day.

Eventually my health suffered. I began to have terrible stomach pains. The doctors found that I had an inflammation of the stomach wall, which could develop into an ulcer. They put me on a special diet. My stomach improved a little, but it wasn't really getting better.

One day an irate gang of refugees charged into the Agency. They were screaming, and clearly on the attack. The building had about fifty offices, with many people on each floor. When they saw the gang, they all disappeared into their rooms and locked the doors. I was the psychologist, and so they left me to handle it.

I was sitting behind my desk. The group stormed into my room, and crowded around me. It was clear that they wanted to beat me up. I didn't know what to do. If I defended myself and hit one of them, I would be hitting a concentration camp survivor! How could a psychologist do that? If I let them beat me up, and came out with a bloody nose, what kind of psychologist would I be? There were no books to describe such a situation.

I put my hands in my pockets, to make sure that I wasn't going to do anything foolish. By a lucky chance, I found a pack of cigarettes. I pulled out the pack, and said "Cigarette, anyone?" I didn't really think I could bribe them with a cigarette, but I was stalling for time, and trying to collect my thoughts. The gesture was so unexpected that it surprised them. Somehow it broke the spell. Several of them took the cigarettes. Then we were able to discuss their grievances, which concerned apprentice training programs for which they had applied.

To learn a trade in Switzerland, a person must be apprenticed to a master. It is a time-honored system. The apprentice lives with the master's family, and becomes part of the family. The request has to go through an incredible bureaucracy, which takes an enormous amount of time.

It was difficult to find a master who would accept a refugee as an apprentice. After all, most of the refugees had spent their childhood in concentration camps, which God knows, didn't instruct them in the social graces. After that, the canton had to accept him, and then the Federal government. In the meantime the youngster waited, thinking that nobody was doing anything for him. So they kept shouting at me, "You are stealing our money, which was sent for us from America. Your salary is our money. We are entitled to this. We want that."

Actually, I was working hard to find apprenticeships for them. I was traveling to offices all over Switzerland, and making phone calls. But even when I was successful in placing them, problems would arise. At the last minute, a youngster might change his mind and say, "No, I don't want to be a carpenter. I want to be a shoemaker." Or he would start his job with the master, but then they wouldn't get along, and after several months he would be dismissed. Sometimes he quit his job after a few months. The bile that flooded my system was unbelievable. Eventually I gave up the job, and my health improved considerably.

Years later, when I was living in New York, a number of these refugees looked me up. One of them, in a very agitated state, told me that he had seen Hitler walking in the street. I told him that we should keep it a secret between us, because most people would not believe him. We didn't want to alarm everybody in New York, and cause a panic.

3. Undergoing training analysis.

Every year I renewed my application for a visa to the USA. Every year Masha sent affidavits to support my application. In the meantime I was taking seminars, and attending lectures on psychoanalysis at the Institute and at the University. I took classes in Adlerian theory and technique. There was a lecture by a woman named Mira Munkh, the director of the small Adlerian group in Zurich. I liked her very much. So after the lecture I wrote her a letter, asking her whether she would take me on for a training analysis, even though I could not afford to pay her.

I found out later that she had my handwriting analyzed by a man who was remarkably skilled. He correctly perceived much about me, and he was also able to ascertain that I knew Slavic languages. On the basis of his report, she accepted me as a patient. She was an amazingly bright woman. She used to say, "I don't have a bank account. My friends and my patients are my bank account." Many years later, when she was very ill, her daughter wrote to her friends and patients, and everybody sent her money.

My analysis with Mira lasted two or three years. Toward the end of it, I began practicing a bit, seeing patients for very little money, in order to gain experience. I was successful, until I started running into difficult cases, such as obsessive compulsive neurosis. I decided that I couldn't treat them with Adlerian techniques alone, and that I would need a Freudian training analysis.

A psychiatrist named Maria Pfister, who had previously worked with me at the civilian

police bureau, introduced me to Dr. Bänziger, the President of the Swiss Medical Psychoanalytic Association. He was a classical Freudian analyst. I told him I would like to have a Freudian analysis, but that I had very little money. He said that money was not important, and he accepted me as a patient.

The Freudians and Adlerians have basic differences in philosophy. The Adlerians feel that after a successful analysis, the analyst and the patient should become friends. The Freudian point of view is very different. Since I thought it would be helpful if Bänziger knew something about my Adlerian analysis, I asked him whether he and Mira would meet to discuss it. Amazingly both of them were willing to do that. It seems they had dinner together. I had never heard of such a thing. However, I have no idea whether it was helpful.

Bänziger was a very busy man. He lived on the outskirts of Zurich, near Jung's home, and he had to commute a long distance every morning. But he gave me an appointment at seven o'clock in the morning, before he started his regular day. He saw me five times a week without charge. It was a very interesting experience. I would lie on the couch and talk for fifty minutes. I talked about everything, about my past, and especially about my sexual life.

During the first three months, Bänziger did not say one single word. After three months I said to him, "Now I have told you everything. I don't know what else to say." He said to me, "Now that you emptied your crop, we can start your analysis." I was shocked.

I stayed with him for two years. He hardly ever spoke. He was very good to me, and he helped me a lot. Toward the end of my analysis, he let me discuss some of my cases with him, and gave me some supervision. I also heard that he had taken on other refugees, and trained them in psychoanalysis.

He was a remarkable man. When I needed some money to publish my thesis, he collected cash from his rich patients and friends. He gave me their addresses, so that I could write letters thanking them. When I had finished my analysis and I was going to the States, I said to him, "I hope to earn some money. Why don't we agree on the sum that I owe you, and I will send it to you." He said, "No, as long as you work, you will carry two charity cases. That's how you will pay me." He later asked me to send him some books, and to make out some papers vouching for an Israeli woman who wanted to study in the States.

After I had become an American citizen, I went back to Europe and took him out to a fancy restaurant. For the first time, he talked a little about himself. He had a daughter who was studying ballet in Paris. We were meeting as equals, but not quite. He was still my Freudian analyst. When Mira died, Bänziger wrote to me "Now that your mother is dead, maybe you are free." I didn't agree with that, but I repeat it here, for whatever it is worth.

The alumni organization of the University of Zurich offered to help needy foreign students. They gave me tickets for a very expensive restaurant, where I could eat once or twice a week. With my tickets, I could also get discounts on lodging and food, while visiting refugee camps at ski resorts such as Davos and Arosa. Once Sonia and I took a vacation in Arosa. I took a ski lesson, and promptly broke my ankle. I was disabled for a while. My ankle had not been set properly, so that it took a long time to heal.

I saw a lot of Switzerland, while I was traveling around. I remember seeing the classic French movie, Les Enfants du Paradis, in Geneva one evening. It was a mesmerizing experience. Afterwards, I wandered the streets, late at night, wondering how anyone could possibly be asleep, after something so miraculous had just happened.

I suffered from recurring anxiety attacks. Sometimes, on the way to the office or school, I would break out in a cold sweat. These attacks have remained with me over the years. They diminished in analysis, but I have never been free of them, partly because of the war years, and partly because of my childhood in Poland.

When the war ended, I tried to find out whether anyone in my family had survived. Some survivors refused to talk to me about it. I eventually traced a famous Yiddish poet, Abraham Sutzkever (pronounced Sutzkever), to Moscow. He had been a member of the Young Vilna group of writers and poets, all of whom knew my father. He told me that my father had been brought to Ponary from the ghetto on Yom Kippur 1941, along with thousands of other Jews. They were forced to dig a mass grave, and then they were shot. I found out from somebody else that my cousin Hadassah was on the street when her mother was arrested to be killed, and that she went with her to Ponary. But I was never able to find out anything at all about the ultimate fate of my dear mother, my Tamara and Lippa, my grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends.

In 1946, there was an International Congress on Education at the Sorbonne in Paris. The *Flichtlingshilfe* sent me and a colleague as delegates. They paid our expenses for food, lodging and travel. We were also the guests of the French government. Since I had a

return ticket, and some extra cash, I decided to enjoy the occasion by spending as much money as I could. I made a pass at the teacher that came with me, and sent a hundred roses to her hotel room. I went to the Folies Bergère, drank champagne all day, and picked up a girl. Then I got drunk and lost her in the Metro. In short, I did things I had never done before, and had a wonderful time. I didn't hear many lectures at the Congress, but there was a ball at the end, with dinner and champagne. Most of the delegates were older people, but I found some young people, and spent the whole night dancing. When I came home, I wrote reports for the Agency on the lectures I had attended. I also wrote a paper about international education for the University. In short, I made the most of it.

Back in Zurich, I had a visit from a son of my great-aunt. He had survived the war, and was living in Paris, where he owned a factory which manufactured toiletries. He urged me to sell some of his merchandise to my friends in Switzerland. He also wanted me to conduct some business for him in the United States, if I ever got there. I promised to visit him in Paris on my way to America.

It was now six years since I had applied for my visa to the US. I did not know if it would ever come. In the meantime, the Polish government had become interested in psychologists. They offered me an attractive job, with fringe benefits which included a car and chauffeur. But I didn't want to go back to Poland under any circumstances.

So I decided to try Australia, even though I could barely find it on the map. I wrote a letter to the Queen of England, asking her to help me get a visa. In reply, I received a very polite letter from her secretary, saying that the Queen had no access to Australian visas. I also learned that preference for visas to Australia was given to people from the British Commonwealth, but that I might obtain a visa, if I found an Australian sponsor.

At the Congress in Paris I had met an Australian psychologist. I asked her to give me the names of some people in Australia who might sponsor me. She gave me six names, and I wrote letters to all of them. Some didn't answer. One said, "I am sorry, but I can't be your sponsor, because I don't know you." One of them answered, "My name is Mr. Piddington, and I live in Adelaide. Before I can sponsor you, I would like you to meet some of my friends in London. If my friends approve of you, I will be your sponsor."

So Sonia and I scratched up the money, and went off to London. She knew some refugees there whom she had helped. One of them needed a house-sitter, to protect his house and two elderly relatives from robbers while he was away. It turned out that there was only

one bed in the house. We had to sleep with the two old ladies, all four of us, in one bed. But at least we saved the cost of a hotel room.

Some of Mr. Piddington's friends were professors at the University of London. They invited me to various homes and parties. Then they all wrote approving letters to Mr. Piddington. I started to correspond with him about getting an Australian visa.

At the same time, I was introduced to Anna Freud. It was an exciting experience, because she was an impressive woman. She invited me to her home for dinner, and welcomed me to her seminars. She suggested that I should not go to Australia, but to America instead. Australia at this point was unprepared for psychoanalysis. They needed their physicians to introduce it.

It turned out that Australia was not a viable option for me anyway. Piddington finally wrote to me, saying that he could arrange for a visa for Australia, but that I would have to work on a farm there for two years, after which I could do whatever I wanted. I thanked him, and told him I was sorry, but I knew nothing about farming, and had no interest in it.

Anna Freud also advised me to bite the bullet, and get my degree. Without it, I would find it difficult to work anywhere as a psychoanalyst. I had been dragging my feet about it, because there were many formal requirements, which were distracting, and irrelevant to my training as an analyst. Under her influence, I finally faced reality.

I corresponded with Anna Freud for many years, and saved all her letters. Later, when I went to America, she wrote to several people on my behalf. At the time, I didn't fully understand that to be recommended by Anna Freud was an incredible honor. Every letter she wrote was like a magic key. People opened their doors to me, just because of Anna Freud.

One such person was David Rapaport, an eminent psychoanalytic psychologist. He was affiliated with the Meninger Foundation and the Starbridge Foundation, and had made an enormous contribution to the psychoanalytic literature. He wrote to me while I was still in Switzerland, and said he was interested in corresponding with me, and in eventually meeting me.

4. Getting a Doctorate.

Back in Zurich, I started working more diligently on my degree. I would have liked to

write a thesis on Freudian analysis, but that was not an option. Freud was not taught at the University, except in extracurricular seminars. They were very old fashioned in that respect. Therefore, I based my thesis on Adlerian psychoanalytic psychology, with some input from the work of Pestalotzi. He was a Swiss educator who believed in therapeutic education, or “heil pedagogik.”

Pestalotzi and Adler had much in common. I already had exhaustive research files on Adlerian psychology, and on Pestalotzi’s work, and I could quote from them at the drop of a hat. Adler had said, “The formula for the human psyche has not yet been discovered.” Pestalotzi agreed with that.

My major professor, Dr. Hanselmann, was a Pestalotzi specialist. He approved the plan I had worked out for my thesis, which would have two subdivisions. The first would be based on a paper I had written on concentration camp fury, or “Lager Choler,” using the results of tests on camp survivors. For the second I would use Adler and Pestalotzi to analyze children’s drawings and handwriting. This had never been done before.

I amassed huge bibliographies on children’s drawings, and on handwriting analysis. Although my knowledge of statistics was minimal, I devised forms for analyzing the data statistically. In the United States, they would have hanged me for such statistics! But in Switzerland, they accepted it.

Then I approached school teachers all over Switzerland. They were some of the nicest people I have ever met, very sweet and cooperative. Without their help and devotion, I could not have done the research. I asked them to fill out a form for each child, giving the child’s economic background, position in the family, and the teacher’s impression of the child. Then each child would write an essay on a subject of his choice. The next day, each child would make a drawing on a subject of his choice. The teachers were enthusiastic. With their help, I collected data on a thousand children between the ages of ten and fifteen.

When I analyzed the data for each child, I found a strong correlation between the subject of his drawing, his handwriting, the subject of his essay, and the approach and content of his essay. On that basis, I worked out a system with which a teacher could understand a good deal about the psyche of a child, by evaluating his essay and his drawing. The teachers were very pleased with it. I promised them all copies of my thesis.

I wrote my thesis directly on the typewriter, with Sonia's help. There was very little editing. My former Adlerian analyst, Mira, corrected some of the German. The final copy was seven hundred pages long, and several inches thick. I submitted it, and it was accepted.

I felt that time was running out for me, and that I had to finish. I had now been working on my degree for nearly four years, which was the minimum period of residence required for a doctorate. Most people spent six to eight years on the degree requirements. After my thesis was accepted, a delegation from the Swiss Students' Union came to see me. They asked me to postpone my exams for a few years. They felt that if I earned a doctorate in only four years, it would lower the standards for the degree. I told them that I would probably have to leave Switzerland soon, and that I didn't want to depart without my diploma in my hand.

I was supposed to submit three hundred copies of my thesis to the Chancellor of the University, within a year after my exams. That was the final degree requirement. To save time, I had my thesis printed as soon as it was accepted, and before I took my exams. If I were then to fail my exams, the effort and expense of printing my thesis would have been wasted.

I had to raise twenty-five hundred Swiss francs to print the copies. It was an incredible amount of money. To give the reader an idea, the stipend I received from the Students' Union was about two hundred fifty francs a year. This had to cover all expenses for my courses at the University. I wrote a thousand letters soliciting money from organizations and private people. Bänziger also raised some money from his wealthy patients and friends.

I had extra copies of my thesis printed for sale. I made an agreement with the Rasherverlag in Zurich, the prestigious publishing house for Freud, Jung and others, for them to sell a thousand copies, which were then imprinted with their name, as if they had published them. Since I bore the costs of publication, the Rasherverlag risked very little by agreeing to give me half the profits.

I sold three hundred copies to ORT, the Organization for Rehabilitation and Training, a Jewish organization for technical training. ORT paid me in advance. I sold copies to anyone who would buy them. I also sent them gratis to scholars and libraries around the globe. In this way, I managed to cover the cost of publication, raise extra money and get

professional recognition for myself.

After my thesis was accepted, I was allowed to take my final exams. They covered a tremendous amount of material. I was supposed to know everything about education, psychology, the major philosophers, the history of philosophy and the history of psychology. Since I didn't have enough time to read and study everything, I had to do it from the seat of my pants.

In each subject, I was asked to write a paper on an assigned topic. This was an open book exam. I had one day to write it, using the library and any other material. Then they gave me half a day to write an essay on another topic, in an examination room without books or materials. Professor Hanselmann was very kind to me. Since he knew I was now a recognized authority on concentration camp fury, he assigned this topic for my closed book exam in education.

After the written exams, I had to take the final oral exam, which covered all subjects in one day. I had to appear before the entire faculty, and theoretically any professor could question me on any topic. However, in practice, a professor who did not know a candidate would usually not ask questions. There were two candidates present at the same time. They were questioned alternately throughout the day, each one for half an hour, while the other rested. Thus each candidate had a half hour break between question periods.

My philosophy professor, Dr. Grisebach, was a specialist in Kant. He was a German, and an avowed anti-Semite. He had two sons in the SS, one of whom had been killed on the Russian front. He hated all foreigners, especially Jews, and Poles. There were several Polish students who had escaped from a prisoner of war camp. In Switzerland, they were required to wear their uniforms at all times. However, Grisebach wouldn't let them into his class in uniform, which effectively barred them from attending it. I was afraid that he would give me a hard time on my philosophy oral.

Kant is one of the least comprehensible philosophers. He is exceedingly logical, and highly complex. His writing is also abstract and difficult. To defend myself against Grisebach, I learned Kantian philosophy backwards, forward and sideways. I completely rewrote Kant in simpler, more readable German. I should have published that manuscript. I gave lessons on Kant to other students. Fortunately for me, Grisebach was called back to Germany shortly before my final exam. My new professor, also a Kantian philosopher, was a nice man. I did very well on the philosophy oral.

My major professor Dr. Hanselmann fell ill. He had to conduct my oral exam at his bedside, with a number of observers to monitor it. Thus he was not present to defend me against the onslaughts of my Hebrew professor, Zimmerli.

Zimmerli had been especially cordial to me. He knew that I could speak, read and write Hebrew as none of his other students could. It was a living language for me, while they studied it as a dead language, like Greek or Latin. He also knew I could translate any text from Hebrew to German and vice versa. In the beginning, he had told me that on the final exam, he usually required a knowledge of Arabic, as well as its connections to Hebrew. He also required a profound knowledge of Hebrew grammar. Since we were on very friendly terms, I confided to him I didn't know much about these subjects. He advised me not to worry about it. He would omit these subjects from my final oral.

Some time before my exam, he began to harangue me about Christianity. I listened attentively, but did not comment. About a month before the oral, he said to me, "Well, what about Christ?" I said, "What about Christ?" He said, "You have to take a stand for Christ. You have to convert." I said, "I don't want to convert. I may not be a religious Jew, but nonetheless I am a Jew." He became livid with rage.

Zimmerli knew me very well. He knew exactly what I knew, and what I did not know. Now he was out to destroy me. The Hebrew oral exam took a half hour. First he gave me a text from the Psalms to read. For any other student, this would have been a difficult assignment. I started to read it. So he said, "I know you can read," and stopped me. Then he gave me a passage to translate. I started translating, but after five minutes he stopped me. He said, "I know you can translate. Now, what are the Arabic connections to this text?" Well I dug up a few connections. For instance, the word for king is melech in Hebrew, and it is malk in Arabic. But I didn't know many of them. Then he questioned me on Hebrew grammar, and again I could answer some of his questions, but not all of them.

I did very well on all my other exams, and nobody else gave me any grief. After the exams, I waited outside while the professors had a heated discussion behind closed doors. The meeting was supposed to be confidential, but at some point one of the professors came out and told me that Zimmerli was pressuring them relentlessly. He wanted them to fail me in my final oral for the doctorate.

The others had no question that I had passed. My diploma was awarded cum laude. If not

for Zimmerli, it would have been magna cum laude, which means with high honors. In Switzerland and the rest of Europe, magna cum laude was required for a university appointment. Without it, I could not become a university professor. As for summa cum laude, that was awarded only about once every fifty years.

Well, I was happy with cum laude, as long as I had my degree. I had never aspired to be a professor anyway. In the States, I had no trouble getting university appointments. Nobody ever asked to see my diploma. But that's how Zimmerli tried to ruin me.

The day after my exams, I delivered three hundred copies of my thesis to the Chancellor. This had never happened before. They were unprepared, and had to print my diploma in a hurry.

5. Coming to America:

Four months before the date set for my exams, I was notified by the American Consul that my visa to the United States had finally arrived. I had to use it within two months. Otherwise it would expire, and I would have to apply again, and get a new quota number. I couldn't believe it! It meant I would have to leave two months before my exams. There was no intermediate degree, such as a master's degree. I would either have a doctorate, or I wouldn't. I knew that if I went to the US, without a degree, I would probably not be able to practice psychoanalysis.

The *Flichtlingshilfe* offered to pay half my steamship fare, as a reward for my years of service at low pay. The Swiss government agreed to pay the other half. They were so anxious to have me leave, that they gave me a statement for the American Consul saying that I had never been in prison in Switzerland. Well, after all, I never had a trial. I was just placed in solitary confinement in the penitentiary, for no sensible reason.

I went to see the new president of the *Flichtlingshilfe*. She was a very wealthy woman, dripping with diamonds and pearls. She was pretty, and voluptuous. We called her, "Chanel Number Five," because she was always enveloped in a cloud of that fragrance.

I told her I would not leave Switzerland. She said, "What do you mean you are not going? Do you know what a visa means? Are you going to forgo it?" I said, "I am not going without my degree." "You'll have to go." "Then you will have to carry me." I screamed so much that she finally said, "I will see what I can do. Tomorrow, I am having tea with the American Consul. He is a friend of mine. Stop screaming!"

The Consul told her there was no way for him to extend my visa. He said to her, "Tell him to take it now, and let it lapse. In a few months, I will reissue a visa for him with the same quota number. But I can't give it to you in writing. It has to be on my word."

For the next four months, I was writing my thesis, and taking my final exams. I was also having sleepless nights. What if the Consul went away? What if he changed his mind? What if he reneged on his promise? My anxiety attacks increased in frequency and intensity. Well, he did it. He gave me the visa.

Sonia applied for a visa to go to America with me. Under the Swiss quota, she received her visa in two weeks. It had taken seven years for mine to arrive. We both booked passage on a small French ship, the De Grasse, which was sailing from Southampton, England. When the American Consul learned that we were engaged, he forbade us to travel on the same ship. "We don't want any hanky panky on the ship. One of you will have to go first, and send a telegram when you arrive. Then the other one can go."

We had planned to travel in separate cabins, anyway. Sonia was sharing a cabin with two other women, and I was sharing mine with two other men. But when it came to immigrants, the Americans were very strict. It took a great deal of intervention by Chanel Number Five for us to travel on the same ship. We were warned that at the slightest sign of misbehavior, our visas will be canceled, and we would not be allowed to enter the US. You should have seen how the Americans were carrying on during the voyage! But after all, they were citizens.

I wanted my US passport so badly that I applied for citizenship one week after I arrived. Five years later, when I was about to become a citizen, the FBI investigated me. They asked my neighbors whether I had slept with any woman to whom I was not married. That would have been moral turpitude. At the same time there was a news story about a university professor in New York, an immigrant who had once been treated for gonorrhea. The information was supposed to be confidential, but somehow it leaked out. He was denied citizenship.

In order to go to Southampton, I needed transit visas through France and England. The British immediately gave me a visa, permitting me to stay a week. However the French, who had once sent me to a concentration camp for deportation and death, could not resist one more opportunity to kick my butt.

I had applied for a transit visa to spend a week in Paris, visiting my great-aunt's son. I had papers to show that I was going to arrange a business deal for him in the United States. I had proof that I was traveling to the US. The Swiss government had given me a return visa to Switzerland, as proof that they would take me back in case I was stranded. There was no reason for anyone to believe that I would try to stay in France.

Nevertheless, the French Consul in Zurich would not issue a transit visa based on my Polish passport. He told me to apply to the Paris Office. After a two-month delay, the Paris Consulate sent me a visa, giving me forty-eight hours to cross France. The French Consul in Zurich told me that this was a mere formality. When I arrived in Paris, I could go to the Consular Office and request a four or five-day extension. It was not a big deal.

In Paris, I spent forty-eight hours running from one office to another, trying to find the official who could grant me an extension. When I finally found him, he said, "I should arrest you. The forty-eight hours have expired, but you are still here. I will give you twenty-four hours to get out." And I did. So much for the French!

The voyage took nine days. The sea was stormy, and the ship rolled back and forth, but I struggled hard not to be seasick. I had heard that a full stomach offers protection against this malady. There was a huge amount of good food available, and it was free. At every meal, I would eat everything on the menu. In those days we didn't know about cholesterol. Between meals, I would run around the deck to develop an appetite. Most people got seasick, but I kept eating, and fought off my nausea.

When I arrived, I had ten dollars in my pocket. Thus I was unable to tip the ship personnel. I explained it to them, and they were very gracious about it. My luggage included a wooden crate holding all eight volumes of Freud, all the literature of Adler, and many other books. It must have weighed 200 pounds. I had to give the porter ten dollars to carry it. Once on shore, he dropped the crate. It broke, and some of the books fell out. We had to scramble to pick them up. I came off the ship without a penny. It was August 1948

6. Fulfilling the Dream.

Masha and her husband Sholem met me at the dock, and took me home to Brooklyn with them in their car. They lent me \$32 for a pickup truck to transport my luggage, and the broken crate. Later they advanced another two hundred dollars to start my life in America. The first thing Sonia and I did in Brooklyn was to baby-sit for their five-year-old daughter.

Almost immediately, Sholem referred some patients to me for psychoanalysis. Since I did not have an office, our sessions were conducted sitting on the bed, in the room I shared with Sonia. After Labor Day I started making the rounds, looking for contacts, and referrals, and opportunities for more training.

I visited Alexandra Adler, the daughter of Alfred Adler. She had been very impressed with my thesis, and she received me with open arms. Adlerians were always very friendly. Unlike the Freudians, they readily accepted non-medical psychoanalysts. Although Alfred Adler himself was a medical man, he believed that a medical degree had little relevance to psychoanalysis. Alexandra said, "We need people like you. We will find a place for you here." I told her that I was now a Freudian, and that I worked with a couch. She said, "You can put in a couch. We won't mind." But I told her that I would not feel at home as an Adlerian analyst.

Anna Freud had written letters on my behalf to some important people in the Psychoanalytic Institute. They were mostly German and Austrian Jews, who were now established, and well-to-do. They practiced classical Freudian analysis, seeing each patient five times a week for as long as ten years. Although they were personally very cordial to me, and even invited me to their homes, they insisted that analysis should only be practiced by physicians. They hid behind their medical degrees, determined to protect their turf and their large incomes, from upstarts like me, who sought to encroach upon them.

They were all very arrogant, and they found many ways to deprecate my training and ability. Several of them suggested that a Ph.D. in Psychology might be adequate for treating children. They pointed out that Peter Blos and Martha Borenstein, who had Ph.D. degrees, did not teach or practice analysis, but worked only with children. Actually, these pompous gurus were woefully misinformed. Treating children requires much more training than treating adult patients. But they could earn much more money with adults.

One of the big lights said to me, "My son is a social worker. I think you should get a social work degree. Then you could find work." Another suggested that I go to medical school before starting my practice. A third advised me to relocate in a small Midwestern town, where there were no psychiatrists. Perhaps the patients there would settle for an analyst with only a Ph.D.

I wrote a letter to one psychiatrist, thanking him for offering me the hospitality of his home. I signed it “with great respect.” Later I heard that he was deeply offended because I did not sign it, “with the highest respect.” This incident may be hard to believe, but it is true.

Some time later I met Kurt Eisler. He offered to give me supervision with my patients. After the first session, he said, “I can’t supervise you. You are practicing analysis, and not therapy. I am not supposed to supervise you in analysis, because you are not an M.D.”

I had many discussions and arguments with them. They would say to me, “It is so nice to meet you. We will meet again and argue some more.” Once I became so angry that I told them, “Analysis has survived because of new ideas. People from diverse backgrounds, such as writing and the ministry, may become excellent analysts. Your breed is going to die out, unless you let in fresh blood.” I think this prediction has come true. Over the years, the Institute has only admitted people who would not rock the boat. I think they have been diminished by this.

The renowned psychologist Theodore Reik told me that because of their attitude, he nearly starved when he came to New York. This was the man whom Freud himself had cited as an outstanding example of a “lay analyst.” He was an inspirational leader and innovator. In 1948, he founded the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis, or NPAP. Here psychologists found a forum for psychoanalysis, which continues to this day. Reik served as its president for a long time. I was one of the earliest members, and I was an officer and Chairman of the Board for many years.

I did make some important contacts, which launched me on my career in America. The director of the Office of Help for Intellectual Refugees sent me to see the director of the New School of Social Research. After chatting with me for a while, he asked me what he could do for me. I told him that I wanted to teach a course in “The Psychology of Displaced Persons.” He said to me bluntly, “You have some nerve! You have just arrived, and you can’t even speak English. What teaching experience do you have? Some new immigrants work in factories, or carry packages, or run elevators, until they learn the language. Do you want to start at the top?”

I was stunned. I had heard that he was a very sympathetic man, but there he was, yelling at me. I told him emphatically that I didn’t want to run an elevator, or work in a factory. I knew what I could do, and I was determined to do it. I explained that the proposed

course would be invaluable for training social workers and counselors to deal with the refugees who were streaming into the US.

As we spoke, he received a phone call from the Dean of the Faculty. They chatted for a while, and then he told her, "I have a young man here in my office." He proceeded to describe me in the most glowing terms, as very impressive, intelligent, and interesting. Then he sent me to see her. I understood now that he had been testing me.

The Dean hired me to teach the course. They paid me half of the students' tuition fees, so that the school risked very little. The course proved to be immensely popular. There was a wonderful spirit in the class. Whenever I was at a loss for an English word, I would say it in French, German, Russian or Polish, and the students would shout it out in English. We all had a good time, and the students learned a great deal.

The Dean also introduced me to a group of doctoral students, who were starting a non-profit vocational counseling service. They asked me to join them, because they needed someone with a Ph.D. to do the testing, while they would do the vocational guidance. We agreed that after five o'clock, I could use their office to see my private patients.

I had the privilege of meeting Erich Fromm, who offered to give me supervision. He was a charming man. Once when I asked his advice about a particularly difficult case, he said, "I don't know. I never had a case like that." Sometimes, when I would describe a case to him, he would say, "Do you mind if I use that in my next book?"

At one point, Bruno Bettelheim, the eminent child psychologist, offered me a position with him in Chicago. I declined his offer, because he had a reputation for exploiting his young assistants, and taking credit for their work. Then Alexandra Adler introduced me to Loretta Bender, the psychiatrist in charge of the Children's Psychiatric Unit at Bellevue Hospital in New York. She was world-famous for her research on the origins and treatment of childhood schizophrenia.

At our first interview, I offered to work three mornings a week as a volunteer. My English was so bad, that instead of saying "three mornings," I said "three matinees." I was thinking of the French word *matin*, which means morning. But in the theater, *matinee* means afternoon. So she said, "You mean three afternoons?" I said, "No, three matinees." We repeated this dialogue several times, before we understood each other.

Eventually Loretta and I became close friends. She was a remarkable woman. She was the widow of Paul Schilder, and was raising two sons and a daughter by herself. Yet she managed to work full time in the Children's Ward at Bellevue, to give classes and seminars, to supervise the young psychiatrists on her staff, and to edit and publish her late husband's writing.

I was her associate at Bellevue for many years. At first I was a volunteer. Then we applied to the National Institutes of Health for a grant, which included a fellowship for me, with a stipend of \$10,000 for three years of full-time work. The size of my stipend was ludicrous. Loretta was not very good at practical matters such as grant negotiation.

We proposed a follow-up study of children who had been diagnosed with schizophrenia many years earlier, so that we could ascertain what had happened to them, and to what extent the original diagnosis could be confirmed. The study team consisted of several psychiatrists, and social workers, with myself as the lone psychologist. We were all interviewed by the granting agency. Then they told Loretta that they would give us the grant, mostly because they were impressed with me. During the study, we published many papers, which firmly secured my reputation in the field of childhood schizophrenia. I was even listed in "Who's Who in America."

One of the team members was a social worker named A. Eldridge Grugett, whom we affectionately called, "E." He was a talented writer, and my coauthor on many papers. Until his death in the mid 1990s, he was my intimate friend. To me, he was a soul brother, the brother I never had, but for whom I had always secretly yearned. I was godfather to his daughter Lucy, and for many years I considered his family to be my chosen family. I bestowed on him the title of "honorary Jew."

During the study, I became familiar with the operation and personnel of Bellevue Hospital, and some of its internal politics. David Wechsler, the Chief Psychologist, had devised the famous Wechsler-Bellevue test, which had become the standard for evaluating adult intelligence. He disliked Loretta, and by extension he disliked me. He felt that we did not show enough deference to his exalted status. He was envious of our prestigious grant, which he knew had been awarded because of me. He was envious of our distinguished study team which did not include him, and of our successes in conducting the research. He tried to make things difficult for me.

Nevertheless, after the three-year fellowship, I became a Consulting Psychologist at

Bellevue. Over the next twelve years, I also built up my private practice in Manhattan, and I was active in the NPAP. I was now established as a psychoanalyst in New York. I was living the American Dream, and I had also realized my own dream of becoming a psychoanalyst.

When I think about the tragic experiences in my life, I know that I would not have chosen to have them. I cannot say I am glad that they happened. But they are an integral part of me, a legacy of my Jewish heritage. For better or for worse, they were the defining events of my youthful years. So I would not want to give them up either.

As a boy in Vilna, I was afraid that I might have to stay there forever, and settle down to an ordinary life. I used to say, "God if that happens, if I don't have the courage to leave by myself, please make a big wind come and blow me away." It is true that when the wind blew hard and I was buffeted by the storm, I would cry, "Enough. No more." But in the end, when I look at all the events of my long, busy life, I understand that life is a license for living. The saddest kind of life is one in which nothing happens.

I survived the Holocaust. I have lived a rich, full life, and a long one. I am in comfortable circumstances, and reasonable health. There are a few people whom I love, and who love and understand me. With them, I am free to do and say whatever I want. I have traveled widely, and I have lived well.

I have been privileged to practice the one profession which I was born to practice. I think I am a very good psychoanalyst. I have helped my patients, by reaching inside of myself, and using my inner resources, and intuition on their behalf. I think a good life depends on using oneself, on using all ones senses and faculties. The more you feel, the more you understand, and the more your life has meaning. If life has any purpose, it is to experience and to feel, to taste it and not to waste it. I am alive.

POEMS by SAUL GUREVITZ (SALIK)

TO MIMI

**In the winter of betrayal
My soul was dead.
Your breath of love
Gave life to the December man.**

**Our lips did not touch.
Our arms did not hold.
Our bodies did not merge.
Yet you are inside me
As I am inside you.**

A MIRACLE 3/10/97, 4/2/97

**In a dark sea of loneliness
Reaching for your love, for life.
To hold you in my arms makes the world safe.
Because I love you, I am young again.
Only a woman, but my miracle.**

**I lay myself to sleep
And pray.
Come to me in my dreams.
Safely wrapped in your arms
I love the world.**

TO MY LOVE 7/11/98

Written for Mimi, my only love.

**Endless longing,
My faithful companion.
I called it my soul,
Embraced its pain.
Now in your arms,
Reaching for peace,
Finding life and rebirth.**

ME 6/8/98

**A tree trunk nearly lifeless,
Roots blindly seeking
To eke a bare survival
From a desert world,
Transformed by your love
Into a blossoming tree.**

FEELINGS

**I do not know what a feeling is,
But I can feel it.
At the beginning was "Fleures de Mal".
Then, Rilke discovered.
Martin Buber swept away with "Ekstatische Konfessionen".
All led to Lao Tzu,
"Tao Te Ching".**

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I LOST MY LOVE

7/12/98

**I lost my love to a computer.
She gives him all her love and time.
Her fingers caress him gently,
In her eyes a dreamy light.
She lives in another world.
No place in it for me.**

PARADISE LOST

**A perfect world.
One male female soul
Reflecting its beauty
Unable to stand each other.
Condemned to separate.
Forever looking to be one.
Forever unable to stand it.**

REBORN

**To the desert of my days
you brought me love.
in your arms reborn,
nursed back to life,
like a baby on shaky legs,
I see a future and reach.
No longer alone - never.**

OBLIVION

**They tried to crush and kill.
I was a mole in hiding.
Survived prison and penitentiary.
Now my loveless life I do not want.
Merciful God send oblivion.**

LOVE

**Longing for love,
An old pain
I used to call my soul.
A blind man reaching for warmth,
To love, to be loved.
“C’est si simple l’amour.”
We are born and die alone.
Mother’s love is only a lullaby.**

VILNA, JERUSALEM OF LITHUANIA

**The murderers live in their homes, sleep in their beds.
Eighty thousand Jews murdered in Ponary.
The men forced to disrobe to save the cloth from damage by
the machine guns.
The children and women gang raped till they begged for
death.
Merciful God, you send them no nightmares.
I am only a miserable human and scream vengeance.**

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death.
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NOT AN ORDINARY MAN

The faces of hate all around:

“They killed Christ!”

(Wasn’t he a Jew?)

The Poles, the Lithuanians:

“Kill the Jews, the Jewesses with us!!”

The police appear, only to herd the bloodied ones:

“You had no business on the street!!!”

The French police: “I’ll put a chain around your neck!”

The Swiss police: “Don’t you know what the Jews did in Switzerland?!”

The guards in Lenzburg Penitentiary:

“You’ll stay in solitary till the end of the war!”

They all live inside me.

No way to be an ordinary man.

THE STREET

The noise of ironclad wagon wheels on cobblestones,

**Voices of barefoot peasant woman carrying their shoes around
their necks to church,**

Chickens, eggs and cheese to the market.

**Plaintive chanting of a procession with huge wooden cross on
pilgrimage.**

**High above an iron bridge with trains rushing to magical lands,
leaving behind smoke and a haunting, lonesome call.**

In winter the deep, white snow blankets all;

**The sleighs move ghostlike around the policeman with the red
bushy beard.**

**A man working high on the bridge falls - red blood on the white
street.**

Dark creeps in early; feeble lights spread yellow.

Whores in twos and threes offer forbidden pleasures for a coin.

The red beard disappears behind the curtained door.

His loud crying carries in the poorly lit street.

**The boy watching remembers the drunk bleeding from his ear,
when hit by the red beard.**

Memories of Argeles*

Paintings by Saul Gurevitz

*Argeles was a French concentration camp near the Spanish border.



Saluk 7 copy, b m fo.



Salute 4copy.jpg



Saluk 20 copy. jpg



Salda 25 copy. fkg

D



Salute 26 copy. f b g



Saluk 9 copy .jpg

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Salute II copy. jpg



Salute 13 copy. of pg



Saluk 18 copy - jpg

Pictures for
They Tried to Kill Me

by

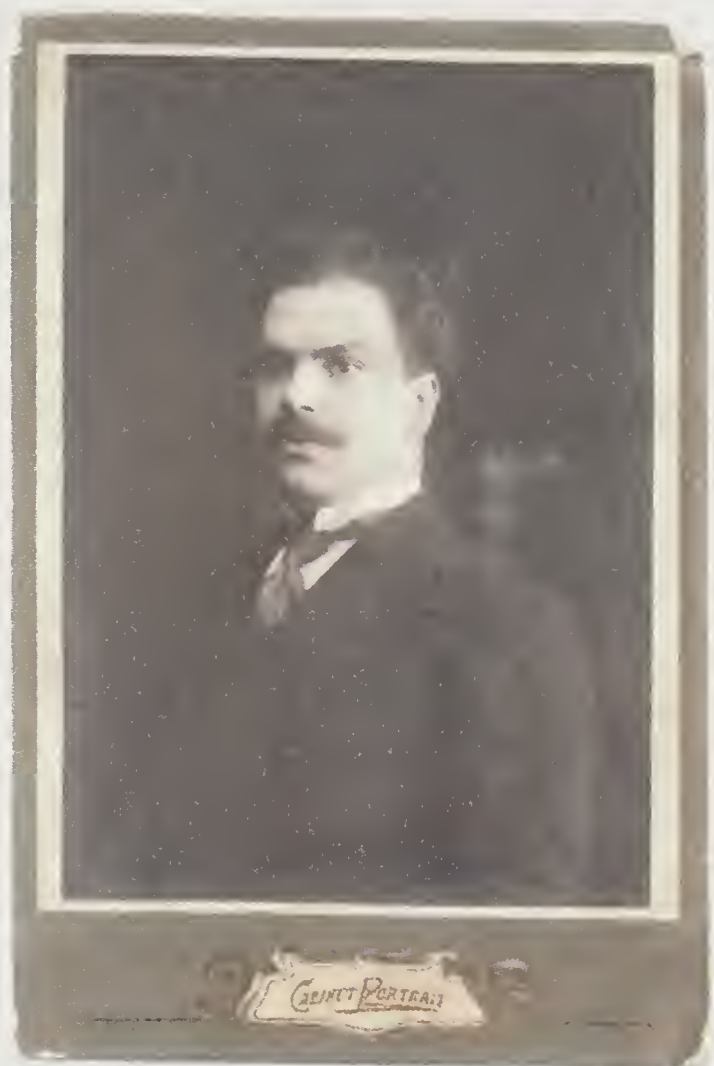
Saul Gurevitz and Miriam Sidran

Fifty-one pages, 156 photographs



Pages 1 to 12
Pages 13 to 22
Pages 23 to 38
Pages 39 to 51

Gurevitz Family and Scenes of Vilna
School Days in Vilna
Friends in Vilna
France, Switzerland



#1A Israel Gurewicz, Father
1910



#2A Hana Gurewicz, Mother
1910



#4A Genya Aronowicz,
Grandmother, 1910



#3A Aron Aronowicz,
Grandfather, 1910



#8AA Family, 1922



#7A Family, 1920

#16A. Family in the country.
Yiddish inscription: "Niemenczyn,
near our dotchka (summer cottage)"

Last row: A cousin, and Tamara
Second row: Mother, mother's sister
Front row: Salik with dog. Jerry,
Father, uncle.
Peasant child in front





#8A Gurewicz Family, 1925



#10A Gurewicz Family, 1936



#12A Israel Gurewicz, 1938,
Father



#20A. Hana Gurewicz, May 30, 1939
Yiddish inscription: "I received this
picture from my dear mommele, five
days before the Grenoble classes ended."



#26A Aunt Rachel Gurewicz



#13A Tamara Gurewicz,
1937

#6A Baby Salik, 1921



#5A Baby Tamara, 1916



#9A
Salik's first
haircut, 1931



#11A. Tamara, 1937
Yiddish inscription: "To Saul,
as a remembrance. Tamara."
December 18, 1937"



#15A Salik and Sayka, May 1938.
Yiddish inscription: "We just came from the school theatre for the last time. We ^{just} took the maturum there,"



#14A Sayka at a kiosk, October 1, 1937.
Yiddish inscription: "A photo ^{just} for my friend to remember me." ^



#32A Great Synagogue. March 2, 1938
Yiddish inscription: "We took a walk, instead of going to gymnastics class."



#17A Salik and Tola near railroad bridge. Aug. 27, 1938
Behind them is Belini Street.
Yiddish inscription: "Our first day back from the summer cottage."



#25A Tamara and Lipka



#21A Salik, Tamara, Lipka.
December 3, 1937.



#18A Gurewicz family on
Wielka Street. Ostra Brama
was behind them.



#24A Tamara and Lipka
Yiddish inscription: "We were
going to take my mother home
from the hospital. April 9, 1938"



#37A Basia and friend.



#23A Tamara.
February 10, 1937



#36A. Parents and
friend. September 12,
1937

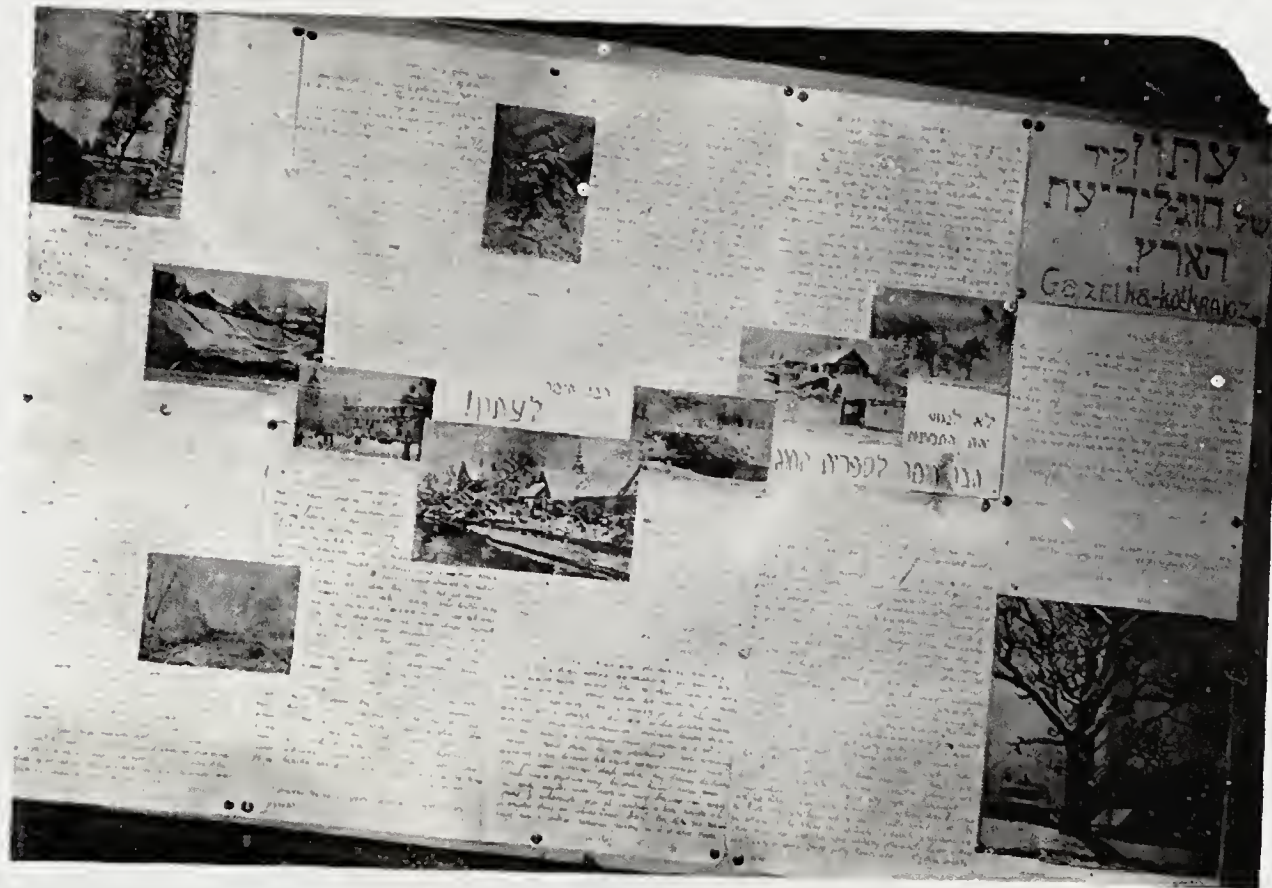


#22 A Family
Mother recovering from
illness



#28 A Salik on bridge

#FA18 Polish inscription: "From Tola, Niemenczyn 1938"



#35A. Newspaper.

Yiddish inscription: "Women's page, 1935."



#19 A Tamara, Basia's mother, Basia
Niemenczyn 1938



#29C Sayka



WILNA

#30 A Vilna.
Yiddish inscription: "Salikel, we keep imagining
that you are still our little boy. On your birthday
we wish your life to be as much as possible as it was
during your childhood. From Mama and Papa."

This picture was a birthday gift



#27A Church tower 1936



#38A Sister of an aunt

School Friends



#18 B Sayra Derevienski.
Yiddish inscription: "To
my dear friend from school.
I hope you will remember me.
July 25, 1938."

#13 BB.
Yiddish inscription:
"Viktor Fonos.
May 18, 1937.
(Vicha)."

#15 BB. Latin
inscription: "Hearty
congratulations."
Yiddish: "Your friend
Zipporah, December 4,
1938."



#16 B Yiddish inscription: 1/28/35
"Dear friend, If you look at
this picture, you will perhaps
remember your friend from the
days of your youth. Naphtali"



#14 BB Yiddish inscription:
"A souvenir for my very dear
friend Saul. Joseph Slitzker,
May 18, 1934."



Note: Boys wear knickers.

#1B Yiddish inscription: "Yarkun (Group) Hashomer, May 14, 1935." Inscription over doorway in Hebrew: "School for the Education of Children, sponsored by Tachamoni."



Note: Boys wear knickers

#FA 19. Yarkun Hashomer Hatzair, a Zionist group. Polish inscription: "Photographed Saturday, January 26, 1935. I received the photograph on February 2, 1935."

17 B

Yiddish
inscription:

"Yarkun
Hashomer."

May 17, 1935

In school
yard.



Note: Some boys
wear knickers.

2 B

German
class.

Sayka at
blackboard.

Salik and
Tola in last
row.



Yiddish
inscription:

"Tushiya
Gymnasium,
class 7, 1937."

20 B

Hebrew inscription

"Mountain class,
1937."





#21 B Friends in school uniforms
Feb 13, 1937



#3 B Polish class with teacher
1937. Some boys wear
Knickers.

Yiddish inscription: "Trip to
The Museum, Cieleznick, Vilna.
1937"



#4 B Class Picture, Class 7, 1937.
Some boys wear knickers.

Yiddish inscription: "End of semester. Last
Hebrew class, May 1937."

Celebration, February 1, 1938. Polish inscription. "Studniowka", P17
which means a customary party arranged by schoolfellows, one
hundred days before the final examination. ✱

#6B.

German
class



#25B "Studniowka"



#23B "Studniowka"



#24B. Yiddish inscription: "A hundred dniowke before we graduate." Dniowke is a Polish word meaning days of work.



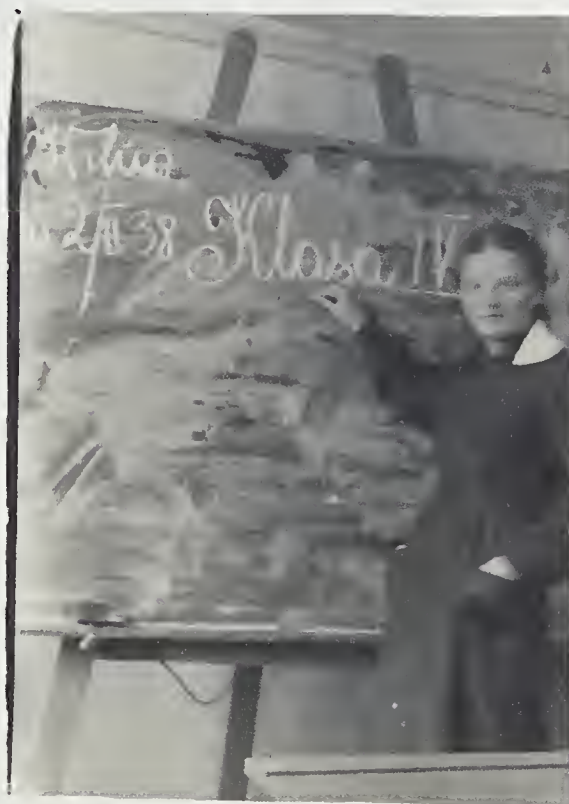
#22 B



#8 B Salik, Tola, Sayka,
March 3, 1938.
Yiddish inscription: "This was
our first bench. Now we are
in Class 8."



#34 C Tola dancing.
April 1938



#19 B Sayka's sister.
Yiddish inscription: "To Salik,
in memory of victory. February 8,
1938."

Joseph Mountville monument.



9B Salik and Tola, April 9, 1938."

Yiddish inscription: "Thirty days before the maturum. From my Polish teacher, Manien."

Hebrew inscription on caps: "If I am not for myself, who is for me?"

Class Pictures, 1938

#13B



#12B

Salik with a
mustache.

Yiddish inscription

"Two weeks
before the
maturum,
April 1938"



#10B





#7B. Tushiya Gymnasium graduating class of May 1938. Uncle Menachim, Director first row, fifth from left. Teachers in front row. Salik second row, fourth from left.



#11B Class picture, March 3, 1938. Salik, Tola and Sayka in first row, left.



#15 B Boys in uniform, 1938



#37C Kayak in Niemenczyn
1937

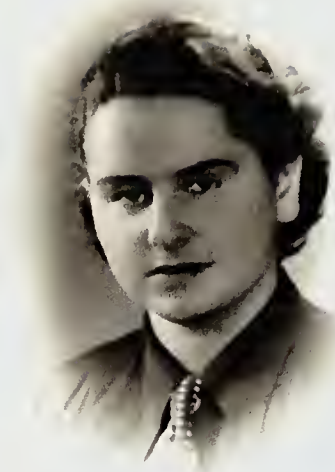


#40 C Yiddish inscription: "Our
pool (beach), Niemenczyn,
July 23, 1937."

#14C
Polish inscription
"One would
have to be an
idiot to pose
for a photo in
39.8° heat.
Manya,
Summer 1938
Niemenczyn."



#13C
Polish inscription
"Beloved and
most revered
Salik, Your
Rivka.
November 26,
1938."



#42C
Sayka,
Salik,
Basia,
Basia's
friend.
Niemenczyn
1937



#20C
Rivka and her
little brother
Tonusik.



#31C
Sayka,
Basia,
Salik at
The Vileya
River.



#16C
Polish inscription
"Short, blond,
... I was
thinking ... but
never mind that.
December 4, 1938."



Manya and
Salik. Manya
wearing knitted
cap.

#19C
Polish inscription
"Exotic dress,
suitable for a
monkey.
Manya,
Niemenczyn
Summer 1938."



#FA 7
Polish
inscription:
"In truth I
never look
like that!
Manya,
Summer 1938
Niemenczyn."



#9C
Polish inscription
"Surely we
never sat on
this stone.
Manya
Summer 1938
Niemenczyn"



#1C
Yiddish
inscription.
"Niemenczyn,
Molotizker
Beach,
June 26,
1937."



Salik and Sayka



#FA 6
Manya,
Summer 1938
Niemenczyn

Manya with Rivka's little brother



#FA8. Polish inscription: "My legs are exceedingly photogenic. Manya. Summer 1938"

#FA9 Polish inscription: "Aunt Manya and Tonusik. Summer 1938 Niemenczyn."



#FA10 Polish inscription: "I am sitting on a pot. And yet, as if on purpose, it is not visible."

Manya wearing knitted cap

#49c



#50c



#51c





#FA 11 Manya and Salik. Summer 1938.
Niemenczyn.

Polish inscription: "For once I am
taller."



#FA 17 Manya and Rivka.
Summer 1938

Polish inscription:
"Hail to Salik."

#18C
Polish inscription. "The most beautiful bridge in Niemenczynia, Summer 1938."



#17C
Polish inscription:
"In this life will there still be such paradise?"
Manya, Niemenczyn Summer 1938,"

Manya, Salik, Rivka

#FA 14
Polish inscription
"This is the trion on the bridge, Tola, Manya, Salik. Niemenczyn Summer 1938,"



#FA 16
Polish inscription
"What a strong man you are!"
Tola, Niemenczyn Summer 1938,"

Tola, Rivka, Salik



#47C Salik wearing knitted cap.



#21C Salik with knitted cap.



#48C Basia and her mother.

#44c. Polish inscription:
 "For Salik, Basia. May 11, 1938



#6c Basia and her brother
 May 11, 1937



#45c Polish inscription:
 " (In the literate manner.)
 Salik! I guarantee that this
 photo is solely to confirm
 Manya's judgment. Gulie.
 May 16, 1938. "



#7c Polish inscription: "To my
 dearest boy. Friday the thirteenth
 is a disastrous date, but love is
 not afraid of its power. Isn't
 that so? Basia. January 13,
 1939." (Salik was in France)

#FA3

Basia as a child

#11 C

#FA1

Tola's
little
sister
Essya.



#10C

Basia's father and
mother, Basia,
Tamara and Salik
are in the picture.



#15C

Manya, Salik, Basia are in the picture.
Niemenczyn, 1938

#28C

Basia and Salik
Hill of the Three
Crosses, Vilna.
October 12, 1938



#4C

Bicyclists.

Sign reads

"Niemenczyn."





12 C Basia's piano concert.

43c



30 C

Basia and Salik.

Salik wearing
knitted cap.



#27C Salik



#23C Sayka



#24C
Basia

#25C Polish inscription:

"To my Salik. When I
get a better photograph,
I will send it to you.

Basia, March 3, 1940"

Salik was in France



#35c Kayak on the river 1937



#36 C Kayak on the river. July 1938.
Yiddish inscription: "Excursion at Magistratzia
Colony with friends, July 19, 1938"

#32C
Rivka's
little
brother,
Tonusik.



#26C Tola and Salik. Horse-drawn kayak on
wheels. Salik wearing knitted hat.

#FA12

Manya and
Salik.Niemenczyn
Summer 1938

#39C

Niemenczyn
1937

#38C

Niemenczyn
1937

#46C

Rivka's little brother
Tonusik, and his
nanny.

#FA13

Salik, Manya,
Tola, 1938.
Niemenczyn

#31D My great-aunt's grandson,
Jean. Paris.



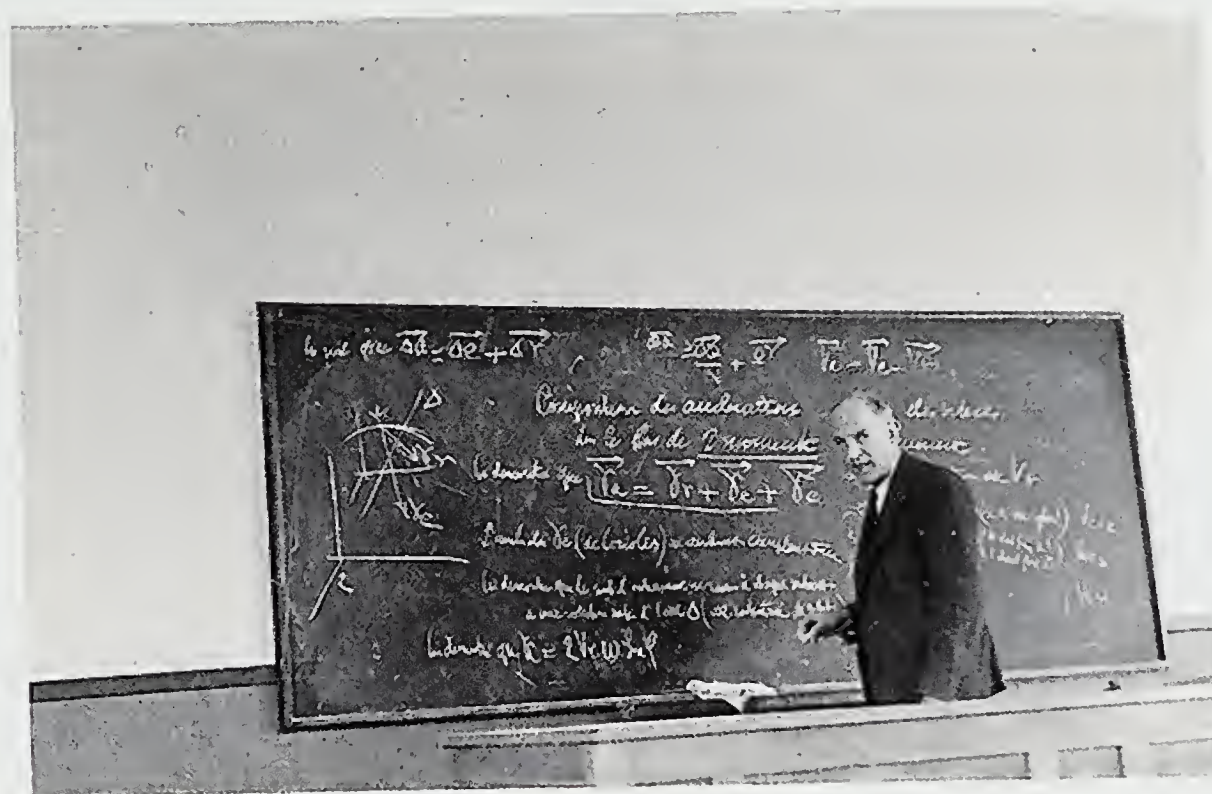
#23D Sasha Kamen

Polish inscription: "Keep warm,
and don't get sick before your
trip. Sasha. Grenoble,
October 10, 1939"



#32D 1939 Salik and Grisha in their
room in Grenoble.

Institute Electrotechnique - Grenoble, France
Engineering school.



#25D



#4D Polish inscription: "To the friend who helped me
and saved me from committing suicide."

#8D Marseilles, 1940.



#35D Salik and Grisha in Marseilles.



#FD3 Salik and Grisha in Monaco

#33D Yiddish inscription:
"Forest Park, Grenoble.
July 23, 1939."

#26 D Salik, Southern France



#29 D 1945



#FDI Grisha and Salik.

Vichy, France



#2 D L'Esplanade de l'Hotel de Ville



#1 D Railroad station, Post Office, and Hotel de Ville.

#27D Salik



#36D
Grisha.



#7D Katya, October 27, 1941
 French inscription: "You are not alone in
 this big world. I am with you always. Katinka"



Katis

#FD 2 Katya and Grisha at
 Masada.

Hebrew inscription:

"Nu, Salik. The world is small.
 Who would have thought that
 the four friends would meet one
 day at a kibbutz near the
 Kenneret?"



#6D Katya
 French inscription: "This is
 our Jordan River. I appeal to
 you, love. Your place is here. This
 country needs all our efforts. Katinka"



#19D Katya, April 10, 1942
French inscription: "For my big brat (son) from
your Katya. Katinka."

#11D German inscription: "To remember a lovely day in July, when five happy people spent time together high on a hill in the sun. It was a beautiful, unforgettable summer Sunday."



Grisha, Sonia, Salik, Ella, Vym



#22 D Vym



#35 D Ella and child



#FD 4 Ella and her children.
May 1951. German inscription:
"For Salik."



#13D Vym and Ella and their
children. Summer 1956

Institut für Angewandte Psychologie. - Zurich
Institute for Applied Psychology.

#14D Professors Conti and Biäsch



#17D Outing of Students and Professors. 1943



Biäsch

Conte



#18D Outing



#15D Outing



#16D Mira Munkh.

German inscription:

"For Salik. Mira.
October 1948."

Mira was Salik's Adlerian
analyst in Zurich.



#9D Sonia 1942
"From Sonitchka."

#3D Grisha.

Yiddish inscription on the front:
"With great friendship from me,
and... RSVP."

German inscription on the back.
"Here is a photo of me .. an
artistic view."

Tel Aviv.

#FD5 Yiddish inscription: "From your good friend Naphtali. Nov. 11, 1945"



#28D Yiddish inscription: "Tel Aviv, November 10, 1945. Jews take a walk Saturday morning. I look as if I had already eaten cholent."



Naphtali's girlfriend is next to him. Grisha."



#10D Lausanne, Switzerland. October 19, 1944
Yiddish inscription: "To Salik from Grisha."



#12D Yiddish inscription: "In my private uniform, Israeli Army. To Salik and Sonia from Grisha. August 21, 1948"

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